
**THE
THIRTEENTH
MADONNA**

**A PLAY BY
Edward Hartwick**

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CHARACTERS

Burke Anderson, President of the United States
Rosanne, his wife
Nelson Young, Special Assistant to the President
Helen Ferguson, the President's Secretary
Roland Carrister, Attorney General
Carter MacDonald, Undersecretary of State
General Paul Zellerbach, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs
Senator Logan Caldwell
Dr. Walter Krauss, Ambassador from Switzerland
Kevin Ramsey
Daniel Beaumont
Stella Connery
Norman Deak
Robert Ascanian
First Federal Officer
Second Federal Officer
A Guard
Captain of the White House Security Force

Other Officials and White House Guards.

The action takes place in Washington, D. C. early in the 21st Century.

Synopsis of Scenes

1	Dan Beaumont's Apartment	Friday	1:30 a.m.
2	The President's Office	do.	9 a.m.
3	do.	do.	7 p.m.
4	Dan Beaumont's Apartment	do.	9 p.m.
5	Sitting Room in White House	Sunday	9 p.m.
6	Room in Justice Department	Monday	10 a.m.
7	The President's Office	Tuesday	11 a.m.
8	do.	do.	4 p.m.
9	Dan Beaumont's Apartment	do.	7 p.m.
10	Sitting Room in White House	Thursday	10 p.m.
11	The President's Office	Friday	6 p.m.

Intermission, if any, should follow Scene 7.

SCENE ONE: THE APARTMENT OF DANIEL BEAUMONT.

It is a one-room apartment, sparsely furnished, but a variety of pictures cover the walls. A counter separates the living area from the kitchenette. It is 1:30 a.m. DANIEL BEAUMONT is sitting at a small coffee table with a glass of beer. He is 28, handsome, intense. STELLA CONNERY enters a moment later with a plate of sandwiches. She is a brunette of 25 and nothing less than beautiful.

DAN

I tell you It won't work. I just know it won't.

STELLA *(as she enters from the kitchenette)*

You always say that. And it always works.

DAN

No, not this time. It wasn't just lack of enthusiasm. They were afraid, or hadn't you noticed? They were really scared.

STELLA

It was getting much too late. They were tired. You can't expect expressions of courage after midnight. They've got classes in the morning. *(She sits down and helps herself to a sandwich.)*

DAN

How many hands were up when I asked for signatures? Not even a dozen. I tell you, they're really running scared this time. I don't know, maybe I ought to forget about the whole thing.

STELLA

You know better than that, Dan. You couldn't do that any more than you could stop breathing. *(She pours him some more beer.)*

DAN

I wish I were that confident.

STELLA

Maybe you could do with a little more enthusiasm yourself.

DAN

Why don't you help me Stella? I never got tired of your attempts to work up my enthusiasm. *(Getting up.)* How about some music?

STELLA

It's getting rather late.

DAN

Isn't it always? But, if you feel that way about it—*(He goes to her and kisses her neck. She rises and puts her arms around him. A long embrace. Suddenly, there is a tremendous crashing sound, and the front door is smashed open.*

[The Apartment of Daniel Beaumont]

Two FEDERAL OFFICERS, in blue-gray police uniform, enter. DAN and STELLA stand aghast, she clinging to him.)

FIRST FEDERAL OFFICER

Daniel Beaumont, we're Federal police officers. You're under arrest. You have the right to remain silent, but everything you say could be held against you.

DAN (letting go of Stella)

What's all this about? What's the charge?

FIRST OFFICER

You'll be charged in due course. Get ready to come with us.

DAN

What the hell is this? You come busting into my apartment at this hour in the night to arrest me, and you won't even tell me why? Are we back in the Middle Ages?

SECOND OFFICER

The charge is violation of the Public Dissent Act.

DAN

The Public Dissent Act? You've got to be kidding. That hasn't even been signed into law yet.

STELLA

Yes, the President hasn't signed it—

FIRST OFFICER

He signed it late this evening.

DAN

I don't believe it—

SECOND OFFICER

It's true. He signed it alright.

DAN

Then he sold us out. He sold us out to that bastard Carrister!

FIRST OFFICER

You shouldn't have said that. *(He slaps Dan's face hard, DAN falls back but recovers quickly and jumps at him. Stella lets out a scream.)*

DAN

You louse! You miserable—

STELLA

Dan don't! Please don't. *(The SECOND OFFICER restrains DAN from behind. The FIRST OFFICER uses a strangelock to hold him, while the SECOND OFFICER handcuffs him.)*

[Scene One]

FIRST OFFICER

Attacking a Federal officer is a serious charge. The judge might just be inclined to throw away the key for that.

DAN

You hit me! You hit me first—

FIRST OFFICER

You insulted the Attorney General—

STELLA

He didn't mean to. He's just terribly excited, can't you see that?

FIRST OFFICER

That's no excuse. Let's go.

DAN

Will you at least let me go to the bathroom first?

FIRST OFFICER

You can wait till you're booked.

SECOND OFFICER

Let him go Steve. It's a long ride.

FIRST OFFICER

Well, O.K. (*He goes with DAN to the bathroom.*)

STELLA

Where are you taking him?

SECOND OFFICER

To the Federal detention facility at Olney—

STELLA

Oh no—(*suppressing a sob*) He hasn't done anything.

SECOND OFFICER

He's charged with violating the Public Dissent Act. And that's something.

STELLA

But if the President signed it only tonight it couldn't be in effect yet—

SECOND OFFICER

He signed it at approximately twenty-one hundred. That made it enforceable at midnight. Beaumont had been violating it all evening, including the time between midnight and zero one hundred—

STELLA

You sure didn't lose any time, did you? You must have been watching him, waiting for him— Is this the first arrest under this new law?

[The Apartment of Daniel Beaumont]

SECOND OFFICER

Yes. Are you his wife?

STELLA

No.

SECOND OFFICER

Good for you.

STELLA

Why do you say that?

SECOND OFFICER

You might be implicated otherwise. It's easy for a wife to be implicated. How long have you known him?

STELLA

About two months.

SECOND OFFICER

You're living with him? (*No reply.*) Well, don't worry. You probably won't be implicated.

STELLA (fiery)

Implicated! That's all you've got to say. Dan is the finest man I've ever known. I'd be proud to be implicated in whatever he may have done. Can you understand that?

SECOND OFFICER

Take it easy, will you? (*The FIRST OFFICER returns with DAN from the bathroom.*)

DAN

I don't know what to say, Stella. This must be a nightmare. Maybe we'll wake up soon, and it'll all be over.

STELLA

It will be, Dan. Don't worry, I'll get help. I'll call Elliot right now. And first thing in the morning, I'll go to Dr. Geller, and if necessary to the Chancellor. You have so many friends, Dan. I'll go to every one of them. There isn't anyone at the University who won't help. And I'll go to the newspapers— You'll be out in no time at all, you'll see—

DAN

(*hopelessly*) Sure, Stella—

FIRST OFFICER

Let's go. We wasted enough time already.

DAN

Oh my God, Stella, take care of yourself—

[Scene One]

STELLA

No—wait a minute, officer. How can you charge him with violating something nobody could possibly know has become law? Its illegal. It's got to be. You can't take him— You've got to let him go—

FIRST OFFICER

You know better than that. Ignorance of the law is never an excuse. Besides it's been on every newscast since 2200 that the President had signed the bill.

DAN

But why me? And why so quickly?

FIRST OFFICER

Maybe you're more important than you think. Let's go.

STELLA

(desperately) I'll call Dr. Kassner right away. He's dean of the Law School. He'll know what to do. He'll get you out at once. Don't worry, Dan.

DAN

Good-bye, baby.

(DAN wants to kiss STELLA, but the FIRST OFFICER is holding him back. STELLA rushes to DAN and kisses him before he is pulled away by the FIRST OFFICER. They go out, followed by the SECOND Officer. Stella stands alone.)

STELLA (after a moment of desperate silence)

Oh my God, my God—*(She covers her face.)*

BLACKOUT.

SCENE TWO: THE PRESIDENT'S OFFICE.

The President's oval office in the Executive Wing of the White House is essentially unchanged from its present appearance. The President's massive desk is at left center. A large box on the desk with buttons and switches contains all communication devices. A door at left leads to the President's private study. The main entrance door is at right. A grouping of armchairs, sofa and coffee table is in the right foreground. It is 9 a.m. and brilliant sunlight is shining through the windows.

NELSON YOUNG Special Assistant to the President is standing by the desk sorting a stack of papers into three piles. He is 36, tall bespectacled, and looks very much the political science professor he was until his White House appointment. A few seconds later, *HELEN FERGUSON*, the President's personal secretary, enters. She is 45.

HELEN

Hello, Nelson.

NELSON YOUNG (barely looking up)

Good morning, Helen. What's up?

HELEN

The President is late. That hasn't happened in quite a while—

NELSON (glancing at his watch)

All of two minutes, so far.

HELEN (handing him a paper)

Put this on top, would you please? Secretary MacDonald is waiting to see him about this.

NELSON

I don't see how he can, Helen. There're so many things this morning. Looks like a rough day.

HELEN

He would like to see the President before General Zellerbach. It's regarding the situation in Zubaran and could be very urgent.

NELSON

Zellerbach is due at nine-thirty. That leaves hardly any time at all. Alright, I'll mention it to him but I can't promise anything. The schedule is just that tight.

HELEN

Thank you, Nelson. (She goes to the main door. As she is about to go out, the *PRESIDENT* enters.)

Good morning, Mr. President.

[Scene Two]

NELSON (looking up and stepping aside)
Good morning, Mr. President.

PRESIDENT
Morning Helen—Nelson (*He goes briskly to his desk. HELEN goes out.*) Anything special?

NELSON
Secretary Field's speech last night really's got the union stirred up.

PRESIDENT
Yes, I talked with him last night. He's got a knack for saying the right thing, but at the wrong time. What else?

NELSON
Senator Caldwell would like to see you urgently.

PRESIDENT
I know what he wants. Stall him.

NELSON
Undersecretary MacDonald is waiting to see you before General Zellerbach. It's about the situation in Zubaran—

PRESIDENT
Alright he'll have five minutes. After I get through this. (*He begins to look through a stack of papers.*) Anything in the press?

NELSON
Nothing extraordinary. Just the reaction that could be expected.

PRESIDENT
Reaction to what?

NELSON
To your signing the Public Dissent bill—

PRESIDENT
What are you talking about? I haven't signed that bill—

NELSON
(*drops the papers he's holding and looks at the President in utter amazement*)
You haven't, sir?

PRESIDENT
Of course I haven't. What's all this about? (*NELSON picks up a newspaper from a sidetable and hands it to the President.*)
This is incredible. Absolutely incredible.

NELSON
All the papers are carrying it on page one. It's been on every newscast, too.

[The President's Office]

PRESIDENT

This is outrageous. A complete lie. If I had signed an important bill like this, you would have known about it. Or am I in the habit of signing bills at night upstairs and sneaking them back to Capitol Hill? Am I?

NELSON

Of course not, Mr. President.

PRESIDENT

Then what's behind this? Who gave out this lie? Who gave this to the media?

NELSON

I don't know, sir. But it won't take long to find out. Do you want me to?

PRESIDENT

Wait a minute. What could be the purpose of giving out such misinformation? Who would stand to gain from it?

NELSON

There was even an arrest made early this morning on the assumption that you had signed the bill.

PRESIDENT

An arrest? Who?

NELSON

A young history professor at the National University.

PRESIDENT (much calmer again)

I want to see the Attorney General. Have him come here at once.

NELSON

Yes, sir. *(He goes to the door.)* Do you want to see Undersecretary MacDonald?

PRESIDENT

(absentmindedly) What? Oh, yes. Send him in.

(NELSON YOUNG goes out. Shortly UNDERSECRETARY OF STATE CARTER MACDONALD enters. He is a balding man of 52.)

MACDONALD

Good morning, Mr. President. Thank you for seeing me on such short notice.

PRESIDENT

Alright, what have you got?

MACDONALD

I'll come right to the point. We've just received word from our embassy in Zubaran that the other side is actually coercing the local Government into permitting them to build their own tracking station. Their obvious purpose is, of course, to jam ours. *(He is waiting for the President's reaction.)*

[Scene Two]

PRESIDENT

Well?

MACDONALD

(awkwardly) You're aware of course, Mr. President, that our own position in Zubaran is delicate to say the least—

(A buzzer sounds on the President's desk.)

PRESIDENT (pushing a button on the communications box)

Yes?

NELSON'S VOICE (on the speaker)

The Attorney General in on the line—

PRESIDENT

I don't want to talk to him on the phone. I want to see him here. And without delay. *(Pushing another button to disconnect.)* Excuse me, Carter. I'm preoccupied with this damned thing here—*(holding up a newspaper.)* I haven't signed that bill—

MACDONALD

You haven't sir? Then who on earth gave the story out?

PRESIDENT

That's what I intend to find out right now.

MACDONALD

Would you like me to come back at a—more opportune time?

PRESIDENT

No, no. I'm concerned about Zubaran. It could become serious. *(Getting up.)* I've always felt that these tracking stations are the weakest part of our satellite system, because they're located in foreign countries. But we're not going to get excited right now. General Zellerbach is due here shortly to brief me on the military aspects. It wouldn't do any harm if you'd wait. I may want to see you afterwards.

MACDONALD

As you wish, sir.

PRESIDENT

You said the other side is coercing the Government of Zubaran. What form is this taking?

MACDONALD

From what Fitzgerald reports, it's both the carrot and the stick. Inducements of better trade relations on one side. And on the other—threats that they might supply arms to their neighbors.

[The President's Office]

PRESIDENT

The classic pattern. Well, let me see first what Zellerbach has to say. I'll be in touch with you before long.

MACDONALD

Very well, Mr. President. Thank you very much. *(He goes out quickly.)*

PRESIDENT (on the communications box)

Come on in Helen. *(He gets up and goes to an armchair with a newspaper shaking his head while reading it. HELEN FERGUSON enters.)*

HELEN

Coffee, sir? *(The PRESIDENT nods. She goes to a sideboard and pours a cup from a coffee service and takes it to the PRESIDENT.)*

PRESIDENT

Thank you. Seen this? *(pointing to the paper.)*

HELEN

Yes, sir.

PRESIDENT

Any comment?

HELEN

Could be someone is getting over-anxious—or even a little desperate.

PRESIDENT

Could be. Have you seen Jack Fredericks this morning?

HELEN

No, sir. But I know he's here.

PRESIDENT

Good. Find out if everybody on his staff has checked in. And if not—the reason.

HELEN

Yes, sir.

PRESIDENT

(He sips his coffee.) Then I want you to get in touch with Kevin Ramsey in Los Angeles. I'd like him to come as soon as he possibly can. It's urgent. And when he comes, I want him to go directly upstairs. And no record or announcement of his visit. You'll arrange for clearance. Only Nelson and you are to know about this. Understood?

HELEN

Perfectly, Mr. President,

[Scene Two]

PRESIDENT

Good. Also, I'd like you to get me the West Coast papers. I want to see what they've got to say about my signing this bill.

HELEN

I've seen them Mr. President. The Journal praises your quick decision. The Observer thinks the bill goes too far, but avoids any outright criticism, The Gazette hails it as the beginning of a new era of strength.

PRESIDENT

Nobody's called it the end of an era?

HELEN

If anyone has, I haven't seen it.

PRESIDENT

Strange. I'd like to see the papers, though.

HELEN

Right now, sir?

PRESIDENT

No, no. Later will do. (*The buzzer sounds on the President's desk.*) Get that, please. (*HELEN goes to the desk.*)

HELEN

(*answering*) Yes?

NELSON YOUNG'S VOICE

The Attorney General is here.

PRESIDENT

Have him come in.

HELEN

Bring him in, please.

PRESIDENT

Have General Zellerbach and Secretary MacDonald wait in case we're not finished by nine-thirty.

HELEN

Yes, sir. (*HELEN goes toward the main door as ROLAND CARRISTER, the Attorney General, breezes in. HELEN waits until he has passed, then goes out. CARRISTER, a man in his early forties, walks briskly to the PRESIDENT who is still sitting in an armchair.*)

CARRISTER

Mr. President! I know there is a very simple explanation for this.

[The President's Office]

PRESIDENT

Good. What is it?

CARRISTER

The network reported last night at ten that you had signed the bill. The rest was purely routine—

PRESIDENT

Then you and I have vastly different ideas of routine. It seems hardly routine to me to arrest a man less than an hour after a new law has taken effect, even if I had signed it. Yet your sole knowledge of my approval came, as you say, from a news report. You didn't even wait till you've had the opportunity to discuss with me the overall policies of the bill's enforcement.

CARRISTER

Mr. President, I've had no intention to usurp your prerogative of setting policy. I'm fully prepared to discuss that aspect whenever you like. However, the case in point concerns a man who for months has actively incited young people at our National University against established policies and practices. A man who, by reason of a certain personal popularity has managed to attract a considerable following. It is my opinion that this man by his teachings, as well as by extracurricular activities, is undermining the effectiveness of the Federal Government. It is also my opinion that this bill was enacted by the Congress to deal with exactly that type of man and to give us a tool for his control that until now's been sadly missing.

PRESIDENT

You've been watching that man—what is his name—

CARRISTER

Daniel Beaumont—

PRESIDENT

—for some time then?

CARRISTER

My men have had their eyes on him for several months, yes, sir.

PRESIDENT

If the newspapers are correct you had him arrested at about 1:30 a.m. Less than two hours after the law was supposed to have taken effect?

CARRISTER

That is correct, sir.

PRESIDENT

I presume that during this brief period he had violated this—new law?

CARRISTER

He had indeed. In the most flagrant manner—

[Scene Two]

PRESIDENT

Doing what?

CARRISTER

By publicly attacking some of the venerable institutions of the Government for the decided purpose of—

PRESIDENT

Roland, I admire your rhetoric, but what specifically did he do?

CARRISTER

He presided over a meeting that, among other things, called for the abolition of our satellite system. He also proposed drastic revisions in our Governmental structure.

PRESIDENT

How many were at that meeting?

CARRISTER

About 250 persons.

PRESIDENT

(almost jesting) About 250? You mean, you don't know the exact number?

CARRISTER

246, to be exact.

PRESIDENT

Where was this meeting conducted?

CARRISTER

In Morgan Hall, on campus.

PRESIDENT

How long did it last?

CARRISTER

It was convened at twenty-eleven and adjourned at 0051.

PRESIDENT

Why was he arrested in his home?

CARRISTER

To avoid a public disturbance. That's standard procedure.

PRESIDENT

What do you propose to do with him now?

CARRISTER

The charge will have to be dropped, and he'll be released.

[The President's Office]

PRESIDENT

You say this with some reluctance.

CARRISTER

I do, sir. He is a menace to society and should not be allowed to go free.

PRESIDENT

Nevertheless, you'll see to it that he is released immediately, won't you?

CARRISTER

Yes, sir. (*He gets up.*) May I use this opportunity to urge you once again to sign this bill as soon as possible. It is absolutely necessary for the safeguarding of our society.

PRESIDENT

I'm giving it my most careful consideration.

CARRISTER

Will that be all, Mr. President?

PRESIDENT

Not quite, Roland. I want your help.

CARRISTER

Yes, sir?

PRESIDENT

There's been a serious leak of information—or better misinformation—last night. Somebody has leaked to the communications media an important bit of falsehood evidently designed to mislead the public. I want you to find whoever was responsible for this.

CARRISTER

But Mr. President, this is a matter for the White House Security Force. Let them handle it.

PRESIDENT

No, this goes far beyond White House security. The entire country has been misinformed on a Presidential decision. Certainly the people deserve the assurance that the nation's top law enforcement officer is taking charge of the matter.

CARRISTER

Mr. President, do you think it wise to make a big issue out of what could have been no more than an innocent newsleak—that turned out to be incorrect?

PRESIDENT

I do.

CARRISTER

Sir, you said you wanted my help. I'm trying my best to give it. In my judgment no useful purpose could be served by getting me involved in something that could

[Scene Two]

most likely be solved in five minutes by asking a few questions of people whose function it is to disseminate White House news releases.

PRESIDENT

I haven't said to make a big issue out of it. If you can get to the bottom of this in five minutes, great. But go ahead and do it.

CARRISTER

Mr. President you said that the country has been misinformed on a Presidential decision. Am I to interpret this to mean you will veto the bill?

PRESIDENT

No. I've told you I'm giving it my most careful consideration. But, in the meantime I want the people to know without further delay that as of now this bill is not the law of the land. And I want you to tell them.

CARRISTER

Sir, you're forcing me to tear open wounds that have barely formed a scab. You're forcing me to be your mouthpiece on an issue in which, in good conscience I cannot be your mouthpiece.

PRESIDENT

I don't want you to be my mouthpiece, although—as long as you're a member of this Administration, I have every right to demand it. But, I want you to correct a wrong—and I wish I could believe it was just an innocent newsleak—that has served as basis for your taking an action which, as of this moment, is illegal.

CARRISTER

It wouldn't be illegal, if you, Mr. President had taken a cue from a clear majority of the Congress—

PRESIDENT

Save your oratory till after the primary. If you're unwilling to do as I ask—

CARRISTER

I've always served you faithfully and I'll do so now. Let no man say that my convictions are stronger than my loyalty.

PRESIDENT

Good. *(He goes to his desk and pushes a button.)* Send in Nelson, please, *(to CARRISTER)* You might as well use the Presidential TV line. You've never been at a loss for words, and I'm sure you'll know exactly what to say now. *(To NELSON YOUNG as he enters)* Please have the TV camera set up for the Attorney General, *(NELSON goes out for a few seconds and returns with two uniformed White House guards. They open a wall cabinet and roll out a small TV camera on a stand which they set up in front of Carrister.)*

You might as well stay where you are. And please keep it short.

[The President's Office]

NELSON

Will you unlock it, Mr. President? *(The PRESIDENT takes a keycase from his pocket and unlocks the camera with a small electronic key. Then he sits down at his desk.)*

Ready, Mr. Attorney General? *(CARRISTER nods. NELSON YOUNG picks up a microphone, and speaks through it.)* Ladies and gentlemen, we interrupt this telecast for a special message from the President's office in the White House. Here is the Attorney General, Mr. Roland Carrister.

(The guards train the camera on CARRISTER.)

CARRISTER *(into the microphone)*

My fellow Americans. You may be aware that the news media late last night and this morning carried the story that the President had signed the bill forbidding dissent from official Government policies and practices in public assemblies, commonly known as the Public Dissent bill. This story is incorrect. As of this moment, the President has not signed it. As you may know, the President has ten days from the bill's presentation to him—Sundays excepted—to either sign or veto it. As the bill has reached him three days ago, after having been passed by a substantial majority in both Houses of Congress, he has still eight more days to consider it. The President has asked me to investigate the circumstances leading to the erroneous announcement. You will be informed of the outcome through regular news channels. Thank you very much.

NELSON *(into the microphone)*

This message by the Attorney General has been brought to you from the President's office. Regularly scheduled broadcasting is now being resumed. *(The two guards return the TV camera to the cabinet, then leave.)*

CARRISTER

Satisfied, Mr. President?

PRESIDENT

Yes, even though your reference to the substantial majority in both Houses of Congress wasn't really necessary,

CARRISTER

No more than a fact.

PRESIDENT

Your use of facts has always been tendentious. But perhaps that's the mark of a successful prosecutor.

CARRISTER

If this has aroused your sensitivity, Mr. President, is it not because you really don't want to sign the bill?

PRESIDENT

I think you know my feelings in the matter. I've never cared much for the bill, and I'd give it my approval only if I'm convinced that it represents the sincere

[Scene Two]

desire of a clear majority of the people. And that it is absolutely necessary for their protection at public gatherings.

CARRISTER

Mr. President, after months of testimony in committees, after endless discussion throughout the country, after several decisive polls—can there still be the shadow of a doubt?

PRESIDENT

There's always that. And there is also the minority—be it small or large with a legitimate issue that may need to be heard.

CARRISTER

Ah, Mr. President, this is the sentimentalist in you. The law provides for all kinds of ways for people to air their grievances. Surely, the—perhaps premature—detainment of a young rabblouser couldn't have swayed you against the bill?

PRESIDENT

Should it? All the same, I respect your position in the matter. So, let's leave it at that.

CARRISTER

As you wish. (*Getting up.*) Meanwhile, I'll solve the mystery of the newsleak. Do you want me to call you?

PRESIDENT

Yes, as soon as you have all the facts.

CARRISTER

Very well, sir. You'll hear from me before the day is over. (*He goes to the door.*)

PRESIDENT

One more thing, Roland. You'll see to it that this fellow Beaumont is released right away, won't you?

CARRISTER

I will.

PRESIDENT

I want to meet that man.

CARRISTER

Sir?

PRESIDENT

Have him brought here as soon as he is released.

CARRISTER

What if he's unwilling to come?

[The President's Office]

PRESIDENT

Surely, a man of your persuasion will find ways of getting him here.

CARRISTER

(with a trace of anger) As you wish. *(CARRISTER goes out quickly. The PRESIDENT closes his eyes and relaxes for a moment. Then he pushes a button on the box.)*

PRESIDENT

Is General Zellerbach there?

NELSON'S VOICE

Yes, sir. He's waiting.

PRESIDENT

Alright, have him come in. *(GENERAL ZELLERBACH enters a moment later. He is Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Agile and slender, with cropped graying hair, he presents a fine military figure.)*

ZELLERBACH

Good morning, Mr. President.

PRESIDENT

Hello, Paul, What have you got for me this morning?

ZELLERBACH

Nothing very good, I'm afraid.

PRESIDENT

You rarely do, do you? You wouldn't be in business if it weren't for the bad news.

ZELLERBACH

That's unfortunately very true. May I come right to the point?

PRESIDENT

I expect you to. Sit down here. *(He sits opposite from the President.)*

ZELLERBACH

The situation in Zubaran has all the makings of a major difficulty. The details are in the brief I submitted this morning. We knew, of course, the East wouldn't like our tracking station there. After all, it's right on the meridian of their capital. But we hadn't expected their action so soon. Their plans to build their own station there is, of course, nothing but a clumsy pretense to destroy the effectiveness of ours. The strategic value of a tracker on their own meridian is virtually nil.

PRESIDENT

Go on, Paul.

[Scene Two]

ZELLERBACH

The situation can become dangerous for two reasons. First, if Zubaran accedes to their pressure, it would mean a violation of the terms of our treaty. This is a problem initially for the State Department. The second concerns me more directly. If they succeed in jamming our station, it could mean losing up to thirty critical minutes in detecting a satellite change pattern. And you know, Mr. President, how serious that could be.

PRESIDENT

Yes, I'm only too well aware of it. What's your recommendation?

ZELLERBACH

Well, sir, we could set up a floating station. It wouldn't be as reliable as a land-based station, of course, and it would be quite costly. Moreover it would be very vulnerable. Or we could start negotiating a treaty with an adjoining country. But there we'd run the risk of the same thing happening all over again. Or—we could stand on our treaty rights and be prepared for a show of force. That, sir, would be my recommendation.

PRESIDENT

You realize that this would mean a direct confrontation. What would it take to back it up in terms of manpower?

ZELLERBACH

As I see it, no more than a few thousand men with the right equipment.

PRESIDENT

Initially, you mean. Backed up by a major component of the Navy, as well as logistics support, air support, and all the rest. Isn't that right?

ZELLERBACH

Yes, Mr. President. We'd have to count on that.

PRESIDENT

In other words, a major task force. But far more important, it would signify a basic change in our foreign policy. For over three years now we've had no major crisis or at least we've stayed clear of situations that could involve us in one. I'm not inclined to change that course now.

ZELLERBACH

I'm very reluctant to recommend it. The last few years have been the most peaceful in recent times. They've also been the most productive. We've been able to improve our posture significantly. We've perfected our nuclear satellite system to a degree that reduces the chance of a surprise attack to virtually zero. But so has the other side. And now, they may just feel cocky enough to test us, to see how far they can go. This is why a firm stand in Zubaran is important.

PRESIDENT (getting up)

What you're telling me, Paul, is that clouds are beginning to appear on the horizon that could develop into a storm, isn't that correct?

[The President's Office]

ZELLERBACH

That's essentially it. Yes, sir.

PRESIDENT (pacing)

The question is, are these clouds really coming up? Or in our perpetual quest for security, could it be that we're imagining them?

ZELLERBACH

Hardly, sir. There can be no doubt, the other side is scheming its way into Zubaran for the sole purpose of jeopardizing the effectiveness of our defense system.

PRESIDENT

No wait, Paul. Let's not make things any worse than they appear. We had to expect a little prodding action in our underbelly. And we've known all along where that is. (*Brief pause.*) I'm not prepared to risk a storm at this point. At least not without a great deal more evidence of what they're really up to.

ZELLERBACH

Of course. It's your decision to make, Mr. President. But after all these years, isn't it pretty clear what their intentions are? And coming, as it does, in an election year, just before the national primary, is not exactly a coincidence.

PRESIDENT

That may be true. However, a country's intentions are not only tempered by its capabilities, but by the extent to which it's willing to commit them in any given situation. Therefore, I believe we must wait for a much stronger showing of their hand.

ZELLERBACH

Considering their other moves, that may be more of a gamble than we need to take.

PRESIDENT

I don't think so. At least, not yet. Meanwhile, we're not risking anything by keeping cool. But we'll also keep our powder dry. I want you to prepare a report for me showing what manpower, equipment, and support would be needed now, as well as in the next three phases of a worsening crisis. And have your budget people estimate the cost of each phase. Just roughly, of course. They're always much too low, anyway. And don't make it too long, Paul. I want to study it myself. When do you think I can have it?

ZELLERBACH

I can have it for you by next Thursday.

PRESIDENT

That's almost a week. I want it on Monday.

ZELLERBACH

You're asking for the impossible, sir.

[Scene Two]

PRESIDENT

(with a smile) That's why I'm President.

ZELLERBACH

Alright, I'll have it for you on Monday.

PRESIDENT

Monday morning, Paul. And—thank you. *(GENERAL ZELLERBACH gets up, ready to leave.)* Have you seen Brooks lately?

ZELLERBACH

Yes, I was in the hospital yesterday. He looks much better.

PRESIDENT

I'm glad. We need him. Be sure he gets a copy of your report.

ZELLERBACH

Yes, sir. Good day, Mr. President.

(He goes out quickly. After he has gone, HELEN FERGUSON comes in.)

HELEN

Mr. Ramsey will be here Sunday night, sir.

PRESIDENT

Very good, Helen. Was he surprised?

HELEN

I'm afraid I woke him up. He wouldn't turn on the light, so I couldn't see him very well, but he certainly sounded surprised. He wanted to know what it was all about.

PRESIDENT

He'll find out soon enough. Good girl. Is Mr. MacDonald still waiting?

HELEN

Yes, sir.

PRESIDENT

Have him come in for a moment.

HELEN

Yes, sir. *(She goes out. CARTER MACDONALD enters shortly thereafter.)*

PRESIDENT

Here, Carter, you read this. *(Hands him General Zellerbach's brief.)* The General recommends a firm stand—sticking to our rights! And risking a direct confrontation. How do you feel about this?

MACDONALD

To seek a confrontation would be a drastic change in our policy. Is General Zellerbach prepared for all the consequences?

[The President's Office]

PRESIDENT

The military always think they are. You know that.— Tell Fitzgerald in Zubaran to sit tight, but to keep his eyes and ears wide open. I don't want them to force our hands just at this point—if we can possibly avoid it.— Isn't there a holiday or a special event coming up soon we could use for some kind of a diplomatic affair?

MACDONALD

Next Wednesday is the anniversary of our Afro-Asian treaty. Not exactly an occasion for a celebration—

PRESIDENT

I don't care, Carter. Let's make it one. Have Fitzgerald make a big thing of it. I mean, a real gala affair—with formal dinner for all foreign envoys- plus as many officials of the Zubaranian Government as he can get to come. And spare no expense. Is there enough time? What do you think?

MACDONALD

Five days? Not quite, really. But Fitzgerald will think up some excuse for the late invitations. But it's an excellent idea, sir. Gives the other side some food for speculation—

PRESIDENT

How about sending the Assistant Secretary for Afro-Asian Affairs over?

MACDONALD

That might look a little overzealous on our part, sir.

PRESIDENT

You may be right. But have the embassy get the invitations out right away. And make it a real splash.

MACDONALD

Yes, sir. We'll make it the biggest celebration ever—commemorating the anniversary of a treaty,

PRESIDENT

Meanwhile, be sure to keep me informed of every development, every nuance that might throw more light on what the other side's up to—day or night, do you hear? (*Then, with an afterthought*) And let's keep our fingers crossed.

BLACKOUT.

SCENE THREE: THE PRESIDENT'S OFFICE

It is approximately 7 p.m. of the same day. The lights have been turned on and the drapes are drawn. The scene is empty as NELSON YOUNG ushers DANIEL BEAUMONT in.

DAN

(As he looks around) So this is the inner sanctum of Government, I still can't believe this is real. What could the President possibly want with me?

NELSON

I'm sure you'll find that out in just a few minutes.

DAN

Does the President always see people this late? It's after seven.

NELSON

The Presidency is a 24-hour job.

DAN

May I look at the pictures?

NELSON

Go ahead.

DAN (stopping in front of a painting invisible to the audience)

What a magnificent painting!

NELSON

That one is a masterpiece. It's a Peruggio. One of the several portraits he did of the Madonna.

(The PRESIDENT opens the door from his study without being noticed by either of the two men. He quietly observes DAN.)

DAN

What a gentle face. Such grace, such innocence— It must have been a very different world then.

NELSON

Yes I'm sure it was. *(He notices the President.)* Mr. President, good evening, sir. *(DAN turns around and faces the President.)* Mr. President, may I present Daniel Beaumont, Assistant Professor of History at the National University.

PRESIDENT

Mr. Beaumont. It was good of you to come.

DAN

Good evening, Mr. President.

[The President's Office]

PRESIDENT

I daresay, you've had quite a day, haven't you?

DAN

I certainly did, sir. It began as a nightmare—and now this, I still can't quite believe it.

PRESIDENT

Won't you sit down?

DAN

Thank you, sir. (*He sits in an armchair.*)

PRESIDENT

The Government owes you an apology. What you've gone through today must have been quite a shock. I hope you won't hold it against your Government.

DAN

I understand, sir, that you haven't signed that Public Dissent bill after all. That's what saved me.

PRESIDENT

That's right. Word that I had signed the bill had been falsely given out. The person responsible for this has been dismissed.

DAN

Is it too much to hope for that you'll veto the bill, Mr. President?

PRESIDENT

Why would you want that?

DAN

Because if that bill becomes law, a fatal blow to personal liberty will be struck. It would mean the end of every kind of free expression.

PRESIDENT

These are strong words, Mr. Beaumont.

DAN

That is my honest opinion, sir.

PRESIDENT

Perhaps I should remind you that a majority in the Congress, as well as an apparent majority of our people seem to think that this bill will, in effect, strengthen our Constitutional right to free speech by removing the threat of a small minority forcing its way to be heard in public assemblies. It is conceivable that, by creating a new freedom from agitation, orderly expression will actually be stimulated.

[Scene Three]

DAN

How can a society claim to be free, when expression is governed by a complicated set of rules designed to stifle it? When the majority must be "protected" from the voices of the dissidents?

PRESIDENT

This bill makes no attempt to do that. It would only prevent persons who are not candidates for political office from publicly attacking established Government policies. Anyone can still express his disagreement to his family, friends, colleagues—to anybody, as long as it isn't done in what is termed a duly constituted assembly.

DAN

How is this going to affect political campaigning?

PRESIDENT

The bill specifically exempts political campaigns.

DAN

It exempts the candidates, But what about their supporters or opponents?

PRESIDENT

Their speeches are also exempt, as long as they're authorized by the candidate on whose behalf they're made.

DAN

This would certainly limit the oratory, wouldn't it?

PRESIDENT

It would place a greater burden of responsibility on the candidates running for office. And that might not be such a bad thing.

DAN

In effect it would limit the participation of the people to a chosen few.

PRESIDENT

Anyone can participate in a campaign, as always. But he couldn't address a public assembly without authorization from the candidate. Do you consider that a detriment?

DAN

Anything that detracts from the people's right to speak their mind freely and openly on any public issue is, in my view, a detriment.

PRESIDENT

(with a smile) It seems to me, Mr. Beaumont, that despite your youth you're hopelessly old-fashioned. Aren't you considering the rights of the consenters, the vast majority of citizens who have or want no quarrel with the Government? Who do not dissent with established policies, except in a harmless, good-natured way? Don't these people have a right to go about their business without being

[The President's Office]

subjected to the outcries by small groups of the dissatisfied? Is the right of the overwhelming majority not worth protecting as much as that of a small minority? And if you agree with that, is it not worth protecting in proportion to their numbers?

DAN

Give legal sanction to oppression? Guaranteeing the lion his share which he will grab anyway? Never, sir. We'd be stepping back into the Dark Ages.

PRESIDENT (to Nelson Young who has remained in the background)

It would appear, Nelson, that Mr. Beaumont and I are going to get along quite well. If you like, go on home. It's been a long day for you, too.

NELSON

I think I will, Mr. President, I'll see you in the morning. Good night, sir. Good night, Mr. Beaumont.

DAN

Good night, Mr. Young. And thank you for everything. (*NELSON YOUNG goes out.*)

PRESIDENT

Tell me, Mr. Beaumont, this meeting you conducted last night—what was the purpose of it?

DAN

To organize a protest against this godforsaken bill.

PRESIDENT

Were you successful?

DAN

Not last night, sir. When it came to the bodycount, there weren't enough hands up to make even a splash.

PRESIDENT

How did you propose to mount this protest?

DAN

By writing a petition to you, Mr. President. But as I said, I couldn't even get a dozen signatures.

PRESIDENT

Why wasn't there more support?

DAN

They were scared. A lot of my students take an apparent interest in our history. But they're afraid to put their name on a piece of paper expressing something they supposedly believe in. They're not willing to risk a handicap to their careers

[Scene Three]

by taking a stand that may be unpopular, when it's so much easier to give up one's principles.

PRESIDENT

Obviously, you're not one of those.

DAN

I come from a long line of rebels, sir. In the best American tradition. They never had much, and most of them didn't live long enough to enjoy their old age either. But they valued their freedom, sir, more than their possessions. And I've got a reputation to uphold.

PRESIDENT (gets up and paces)

(After a short pause) There's so denying, I've had misgivings about this bill for some time. But the public is clamoring for something to stop small groups of agitators trying to force their ideas on them. And the Congress expressed this sentiment by its vote.

DAN

But in the furor this bill has created, we've almost forgotten what brought it on: opposition to the nuclear satellite system. Mr. President, during the debate raging five or six years ago, the chief argument for its adoption was that it would buy time. That's because of our technological superiority then, we might have an advantage of—what was it?—five or six years. Well, have we had it? New weapons create new tensions and, for the enemy, new challenges. What has it brought us? Now, they've got it, too. And this has created new anxieties that dwarf all previous ones. Now, the outcry is for more satellites. More tracking stations. And an improved capability of knocking theirs out of orbit. Where can this lead to? The other side will do exactly the same. So, the people who opposed this system six years ago now urge its abandonment. But, instead of listening to their reasoning, we try to stifle their voices. And instead of giving the issues complete airing—we ban dissent. And this means in effect, we're scrapping freedom of speech.

PRESIDENT

Restrictions on free speech are by no means without precedent. As long ago as World War I, a Wartime Sedition Act prescribed long prison terms for saying no more than Federalist leaders had said in 1812 and Whigs in 1846.

DAN

But we're not at war, sir.

PRESIDENT

We're not at peace either, and haven't been for a long time. Make no mistake about that. We've had a period of calm. And this required a great deal of restraint. It doesn't seem unreasonable, therefore, to expect some restraint in expressing opposition in public.

[The President's Office]

DAN

But does this help the cause of peace? Are wars prevented through censorship of expression? Isn't the opposite true? Isn't the absence of communications causing the hostility? The government of each sovereign nation has a virtual monopoly on communicating with other countries. And each proclaims attitudes—hostile or friendly—which the citizens dutifully accept and even pass them off as their own. Only if this monopoly is broken, can we seriously begin to hope for an alternative to war.

PRESIDENT

Throughout the last century, intellectuals of various countries have tried similar approaches. They've conducted endless studies—they've tried to understand the reasons for the barriers dividing nations, but they've made no headway in bringing them closer together.

DAN

Have we trusted those intellectuals, Mr. President? Haven't we always looked at them with suspicion? Perhaps because they tried to break through this monopoly, they posed a threat to each nation's self-accorded right to formulate the viewpoint of its citizens regarding other countries.

PRESIDENT

The national interest may demand certain discretion on the part of all citizens.

DAN

Yes, sir. But now we want to take away the right to dissent openly with all official policies—thereby removing the last hope of ever breaking through this exclusive privilege the governments of the world guard so zealously, and robbing ourselves of any real chance for peace. This bill is wrong, sir, no matter how one looks at it. It defies the principles on which this nation was founded. It defies the spirit of the Constitution.

PRESIDENT

The Supreme Court doesn't seem to think so. In the Williamson decision, it clearly affirmed the people's right to prevent noisy minorities from airing their opinions in public. This was not held to violate either the First Amendment or our traditional freedom of expression.

DAN

No, Mr. President, we're deceiving ourselves. The erosion of our freedom began a long time ago. When laws were passed requiring permits for parades, limiting or closing public areas for peaceable assemblies—thereby giving a judge or a police commissioner the power to determine what sentiment may or may not be expressed in public. When security clearances became a requisite for virtually every job—and these are largely based on what opinions a person holds. And if these happen to be unpopular to current sentiment—no clearance and no job! When wiretapping, under whatever pretense was legalized. When the police were authorized to break into a man's home unannounced, as happened to me this morning! When bail is set so high that most suspects, even if charged with only

[Scene Three]

misdeemeanors, cannot raise it—then, Mr. President—and there are many more examples—we lost what had been promised us. And now our right to disagree with governmental policies is threatened.

PRESIDENT

Go on. I am still listening.

DAN

Each step along the way was small, but many small steps also lead to the end of the road. This bill is just another step, but it will lead to others. Yes, in the span of a few decades—if not sooner—we will have given up almost everything this nation had promised us—the culmination of a dream as old as mankind itself. Don't wreck this dream completely, Mr. President. You have the opportunity at least to stem the tide. If the right to dissent in public is taken from us, our state of mind will be no different from that of people living under the dictatorships we have so long opposed. Except with us it will be far more tragic. They've never known freedom. We have—and we legislated it out of existence!

PRESIDENT

You're not without persuasion, Mr. Beaumont. In fact, listening to you reminded me of the days when I was young. My hair was long then—would you believe it came to here—(*pointing to his neck*) It was a symbol of opposing what we used to call the Establishment, or better, of blaming it for everything that has gone wrong. And there was plenty. And I suppose we felt better for finding somebody to blame—rather than taking the much more arduous road of trying to shape the world to our liking. But then we grew up and had to make our own way—and gradually our hair became shorter again.

DAN

And did you forget everything you had opposed?

PRESIDENT

No. But the values we tried to change were too deeply rooted in our civilization. Oh, we made some important inroads of course. We learned to abide by the rules of nature. This meant improving controls to preserve our remaining natural resources. And as you know, this triggered some economic crises. We had to curb aimless spending and consumption. And with every control we had to clamp on, we took a bit from every individual's freedom of action. We didn't like it, but we had no choice if we wanted to survive. And we did.

DAN

If we learned to live with the limitations of this earth, why couldn't we learn to live with one another?

PRESIDENT

A good question. I imagine we could if we absolutely had to. If, for example, we'd face some kind of mortal danger from outside this planet, mankind would be quickly united.

[The President's Office]

DAN

Because we'd face a common enemy on whom to focus our hostility? Then the trend seems to be irreversible. We can survive only collectively. As helpless members of a rigid mass. But we are doomed as individuals.

PRESIDENT

Doomed? I wouldn't call it that. But as a student of history you'll know that mankind can never retrogress to another era—even if some aspects would make that appear desirable. And as a teacher, you'll undoubtedly know how difficult it is to change the mind of a single human being.

DAN

Yes, sir, that I do. But sometimes a teacher can make his students see something new, something that seems better. And most reasonable students want to give it a try. Why would our elected leaders want to do less?

PRESIDENT

Because, if a man cares about being reelected, he had better stick close to the wishes of his constituents.

DAN

Is that why you're reluctant to veto the bill, Mr. President?

PRESIDENT

It's an important consideration. And it comes just two weeks before the national primary. If I wouldn't care for another term, my decision would be a lot easier. But I have a lot of unfinished business left, so I do care. Therefore, I may not want to give my opponents another issue to use against me.

DAN

If that's the case, why do you hesitate, sir?

PRESIDENT

Unfortunately, it isn't that simple. I have a conscience, too. And I have an obligation to the people who believe in me—even if they turn out to be a minority. (*He pauses for a moment.*) There is something you should know. Your arrest this morning evidently had been well planned. The false newsleak last night was part of a scheme designed to dramatize my reluctance to sign the bill. At the same time, the Attorney General sought to make capital by demonstrating his eagerness to enforce the law—if it should become the law of the land. He put me on the defensive, while giving himself the aura of a champion of the people, taking advantage of the apparent sentiment for the bill.

DAN

Are you going to let him get away with it, sir?

PRESIDENT

I don't intend to, Dan. May I call you that?

[Scene Three]

DAN

I'd be much more comfortable if you would, sir.

PRESIDENT

Good. Were you interviewed by anyone when you were released from Olney?

DAN

No, sir. There were no reporters. I was picked up by two Federal policemen. They brought me directly here.

PRESIDENT

Weren't you surprised?

DAN

In a way. But after the events of this morning, nothing surprised me very much any more.

PRESIDENT

You must be hungry, Dan. Would you care for something to eat?

DAN

No, thank you, sir.

PRESIDENT

How about a drink?

DAN

Well, Mr. President, I wouldn't mind that, if it isn't any trouble.

PRESIDENT

None at all. (*He opens a cabinet in a wall recess.*) What would you like?

DAN

Bourbon, please.

PRESIDENT

Ice?

DAN

Yes, sir. (*The PRESIDENT fixes two drinks and hands one glass to DAN.*) Mr. President, all this is like a dream.

PRESIDENT

Just as long as it is no longer a nightmare. (*They both drink.*)

DAN

Who would have believed last night I'd drink with the President!

PRESIDENT

They'll believe you now. If you'd turn on the news, you'd find yourself very much in the headlines. Did you know that?

[The President's Office]

DAN

No, sir.

PRESIDENT

You might even find that your life won't be exactly the same after your name's been splashed all over the country. If you play your cards right, it could very well turn out to your advantage.

DAN

I wouldn't care for that, Mr. President.

PRESIDENT

But you stand for something now. You've committed yourself to a cause. People have used lesser opportunities as a launchpad for a new career. Or do you want to teach all your life?

DAN

Not necessarily, sir.

PRESIDENT

You have strong convictions, and you have eloquence. The Government could use a man like you. As a matter of fact, so could I. Does that interest you?

DAN

No, sir. Please don't misunderstand, Mr. President. I'm grateful for your confidence. But I prefer to live my life my own way, as much as this is still possible. My demands are modest. I have everything I want. Except one thing.

PRESIDENT

And what is that?

DAN

I want us to live in peace.

PRESIDENT

(after a moment's pause) You teach history, Dan. Hasn't that shown you that in this world no nation can act entirely the way it wants? That we're not the master of our destiny?

DAN

Because I teach history, sir, I know that what I have in mind has never been tried by a powerful nation. We repeat the same pattern over and over again. We can achieve a breakthrough only if we honestly want it. If we respect the sanctity of life, then let us act accordingly. Take the first step, sir. I realize it'll take time to bring about a change. But what is needed is a start. Let this be the moment. Break this void in our relations with the East. Arrange a conference of the world's leaders and call for the abandonment of all nuclear satellites that hold this world in fear, and day and night serve to remind us that man is our enemy, and we're the enemy of man! The guidance of one inspired leader is all that is required for a start. You can be that man, Mr. President.

[Scene Three]

PRESIDENT

I am impressed with your enthusiasm, Dan. Unfortunately you don't know the world as I do. I know what can be done—with reasonable safety—and what can't. And any form of unilateral action toward disarmament will be interpreted as weakness by the other side. And so would be the mere suggestion of a disarmament conference. The consequences could be disastrous. The realities of our times are against it.

DAN

Isn't reality what we make it, sir? If we accept this kind of life—if we accept the concept of a supergovernment that can condition the mentality of people for its purpose—that determines all phases of our lives and reduces each individual to a minuscule unit whose existence is policed by a small strip of computer tape—then this is our reality, until we change it. But reality is not inflexible. What is a dream today could very well become the reality of the future. But we must lay the cornerstone now.

(A buzzer sounds on the President's desk.)

PRESIDENT

Excuse me. *(Answering)* Yes? Put him on. Yes, Carter. I see... Yes. Will you hold on a minute, please. *(to DAN)* Your ideas interest me. I'd like to see some concrete proposals on—how you envision a return to individualism in our society. And how we can strengthen, instead of weaken, the preservation of our rights. But I've got to have specifics, details—an orderly program I can consider. Can you work that out?

DAN

Can I, sir? If you'll let me, I'll be the happiest guy alive.

PRESIDENT

Then start on it. I want to see your ideas orderly expressed on paper. The only thing I'll promise now is that I'll read them.

DAN

This is more than I could have ever expected. I'm going to get started at once, sir.

PRESIDENT

Now don't make it too long. And arrange for an appointment with Nelson Young some time next week. Let me see what you can come up with. You'll bring it here yourself. I may have some questions. Will you do that?

DAN

I most certainly will, sir. This must be the luckiest day in my life.

PRESIDENT

Good. I'm glad you're safe, Dan. For your sake and for the country's sake, And now, good night. *(He holds out his hand which DAN shakes with cordiality.)*

[The President's Office]

DAN

Good night Mr. President. And thank you. Thank you very much. *(He goes out quickly.)*

PRESIDENT

(On the phone) Yes, Carter... Yes. Then it just happened (looking at his watch) twenty minutes ago. Who informed you? I see. Well, it certainly looks like it. Yes, no question about it. This is part of a much wider maneuver. Yes. You'd better see me first thing in the morning. And, should something else develop, be sure to call again... Alright, Carter. Good night.

(He hangs up and looks glumly before him. Then he picks up the phone again, yet hesitates pushing the button. Slowly, he replaces the receiver again.)

BLACKOUT.

SCENE FOUR: THE APARTMENT OF DANIEL BEAUMONT.

It is 9 p.m. of the same evening. STELLA CONNERY is in the kitchenette, as DAN comes in. She puts down her dishes and they rush into each other's arms.

STELLA

Oh, Dan, Dan. Don't let go, I still can't believe it all.

DAN

I can't believe it myself. One day—it seems like—I don't know how long. Do you know where I've been? Do you? In the White House—with the President. Can you imagine?

STELLA

Yes, it's been on every newscast. Isn't it fantastic?

DAN (gently freeing himself)

What did they have to say about me? Not one good word, I bet.

STELLA

You're wrong. They called you brave and all kinds of things—

DAN

But somebody called me a man who uses his classroom as an illicit forum for his unorthodox ideas. I heard it.

STELLA

Yes, someone said that, too.

DAN

I don't care, Stella. The President is interested. He wants to see on paper my ideas on restoring greater individual freedom; on how we can safeguard against still further erosion of our rights—

STELLA

That's wonderful, that's what you've been hoping for—

DAN

In my wildest dreams, yes. Yeah, this was quite a day.

STELLA

You must be starved. I'll fix you something—

DAN

No, no. Let's go out. This calls for a celebration. Do you have any money?

STELLA

Yes, I think so.

[The Apartment of Daniel Beaumont]

DAN

Great, I don't. Will you lend me whatever you got till next week, baby?

STELLA

Sure.

DAN

Wonderful. How about a drink?

STELLA

Sounds good.

DAN (*going to the kitchenette to fix the drinks*)

Two bourbons on the rocks coming up.— Do you know that I had a drink with the President? And what a drink he poured me! I can still feel it.

STELLA

You're quite a guy, aren't you?

DAN

You know it, baby.— I bet they didn't say on the air I was caught in a powerplay between the President and Carrister, did they?

STELLA

Not in those words. But they did say that Carrister's apparently overzealous action might have been "politically inspired"—

DAN

That could be the understatement of the year. I'd like to meet that guy—

STELLA

He's not the kind of man to have for an enemy—

DAN

And he sure isn't the kind of guy to have for a friend. (*He returns with the drinks and hands STELLA one.*) Tonight I don't want to think about anything except you and me. Here's to us. (*He lifts his glass and drinks. STELLA sips on hers.*)

STELLA

What a day this has been for me, too. I couldn't bear it if something were to happen to you again.

DAN

Nothing's going to happen. The President himself is keeping an eye on me. (*He sits next to her and kisses her.*)

"From darkest night to Beaumont's fairest day—"

STELLA

Dan, let's get married.

[Scene Four]

DAN

Let's not start that again. You know how I feel about that.

STELLA

But you still don't seem to know how I feel. I've got no security at all.

DAN

You've got all you need, baby. A marriage license would only give you a false sense of security. If we should ever decide to bring a kid into this sad little world, we'll talk about it. Unless society by then has come over to our way of thinking—

STELLA

Your way, not mine. I want to have a child. What good is it to wait forever?

DAN

Not forever, only till this crazy world's come to its senses a little more.

STELLA

That means forever.

DAN

Come on, now.— Where do you want to eat?

STELLA

It doesn't matter.

DAN

Let's try out Luigi's—

STELLA

That's terribly expensive.

DAN

I don't care. Tonight we're going to live a little. *(The doorbell rings.)* Who the hell could that be at this time? *(He goes to the door and opens it. NORMAN*

DEAK, a blond, balding man in his mid-thirties stands in the door. He is intoxicated.)

DEAK

Dan Beaumont? Mr. Beaumont—I'm Norman Deak. You probably never heard of me. Nobody has—until this morning that is. When I was fired from my job on the White House communications staff. You see, I was the guy who leaked that story to the media—that the President had signed—

DAN

Oh yeah? Well, what do you want here?

DEAK

I came to apologize, Mr. Beaumont. *(He braces himself against the door frame, as he has difficulty standing up.)* May I come in for just a sec— As you may notice, I've had a few to get the old courage up—

[The Apartment of Daniel Beaumont]

DAN

We're just on our way out. Well alright, come on in for a moment. (*DEAK staggers in.*) You'd better sit down. Stella, we've got company, You'll never guess who's here— (*STELLA comes in from the kitchenette.*) This is Norman Deak. He's the one who leaked that story—

DEAK (*struggling to his feet*)

How d'you do? I'm sorry to—barge in like this. But I had to shake this guy's hand—I had to tell him how—terrible I feel about this whole thing. (*To Dan*) It wasn't anything against you personally, you understand. But you've suffered—if only for a little while. But it wasn't right. It wasn't right at all—

STELLA

Please sit down.

DEAK

Thank you. (*He sits down.*)

DAN

How did this thing happen? Why did you give out a false story?

DEAK

That's a long story by itself. And not a very pretty one. You want to go out. You want to be happy. You don't want to hear it.

DAN

It was Carrister's idea, wasn't it? He put you up to this.

DEAK

There's more to it than that, Mr. Beaumont. A lot more.

DAN

But you're working for him—and it was his idea, isn't that right?

DEAK

In a way. But it isn't as simple as that. The Attorney General is a fine man. A man of high principles—

DAN

That's a matter of opinion—

DEAK

He means to do right by the people—

DAN

If you came here to convince me of that, you're wasting your time. So, if you'll excuse us—

STELLA

Dan! (*to Deak*) He doesn't mean that. But after what he's been through today—

[Scene Four]

DAN

I do mean it. And now, we have to be going—

DEAK

Don't get me wrong, Mr. Beaumont. The President is a fine man, too. But he's out of touch with the people, if you know what I mean—

DAN

I don't know what you mean. And I couldn't agree less. You've got some nerve to say that. Don't you think you owe some loyalty to the man you were working for? What a rotten thing to do—

STELLA

Dan, Mr. Deak came here to apologize—

DAN

Well, I guess he has. And now, you'll have to excuse us—

DEAK

I think I made things worse by coming here. Will you forgive me, Miss—

STELLA

Connery—

DEAK

Miss Connery. And you, sir. I meant no harm to you. You're a fine man. Will you forgive me?

DAN

If you meant me no harm, what's there to forgive?

DEAK

You're also a hard man, Mr. Beaumont. You don't bend an inch, do you?

STELLA

No, he isn't. You just happened to come at the wrong time.

DEAK

Is there ever a right time to say what I came to say? But you're very kind, Miss Connery. You're very good for Dan, aren't you? You really love him, don't you?

DAN

What's that supposed to mean? I think you'd better leave right now.

DEAK

Alright, if that's how you feel. Goodbye, Mr. Beaumont. And thank you for—at least trying to understand—*(He holds out his hand, but Dan doesn't take it.)* Good luck to you, Dan—

DAN

(Finally takes the proffered hand) Thank you. Good luck to you, too.

[The Apartment of Daniel Beaumont]

DEAK

I'll need it. We all will. Good night, Miss Connery.

STELLA

Good night. (*Exit NORMAN DEAK.*)

DAN

Well, what was all that about? A case of conscience?

STELLA

Maybe.

DAN

Why, Stella, you're white as a sheet. What's the matter?

STELLA

Nothing, Dan. Nothing. I'll be alright. (*She sits down.*)

DAN

Can I get you something? A glass of water? A drink?

STELLA

No, Dan. I'm O.K. It's been a long and hectic day.

DAN

It sure has. But you want to go out, don't you? You feel strong enough, don't you, bunny?

STELLA (*getting up*)

When you call me bunny, I feel strong enough for anything. Oh, Dan— (*He puts his arm around her.*)

DAN

What's the matter, bunny? (*She doesn't answer, but cuddles up to him.*) Come on, there's no reason to feel like that. We're going to have a good dinner now, and you're going to feel great. Everything's going to be alright, you'll see.

STELLA

It's got to be, It's just got to be. (*She clings to him even closer.*)

BLACKOUT.

SCENE FIVE: A SITTING ROOM IN THE WHITE HOUSE.

It is one of the smaller rooms in the Presidential quarters on the second floor of the White House. It is nine o'clock in the evening.

ROSANNE, the President's wife, enters with KEVIN RAMSEY. She is a rather petite brunette with an easy, amiable manner. RAMSEY is tall, suave, poised.

RAMSEY

That was a delicious dinner, Rosanne. Just like old times. Don't you miss fussing around in your own kitchen? You were such a marvelous cook.

ROSANNE

Sometimes. But there is so much else to do around here. I really don't have much time to think about what I'm missing.

RAMSEY

I can well imagine. But there must be compensations.

ROSANNE

I suppose there are. *(She sits down on the sofa.)* Why don't you sit here with me Kevin? It's more comfortable.

RAMSEY

(sitting down.) Thank you. Yes, I recognize the sofa. Were you able to fit all your furniture in here?

ROSANNE

Fit it in? My goodness, Kevin, it doesn't even fill three rooms here. I'm thankful this place comes furnished.

RAMSEY

(with a chuckle) I bet you are at that. Do you mind a cigar, Rosanne?

ROSANNE

Not at all. Burke used to smoke one after dinner. I always liked the smell of the first few puffs. But he doesn't smoke any more.

RAMSEY

(after lighting his cigar) He looks a bit tired, doesn't he?

ROSANNE

Who wouldn't—in his shoes? They say that one year in office is like five. And that's no exaggeration. I know. But you are looking well, Kevin. You haven't changed at all. What's your secret?

(The PRESIDENT enters.)

PRESIDENT

How do you like that? I leave you two alone for a couple of minutes, and right away she's asking for your secrets, Kevin.

[A Sitting Room in the White House]

ROSANNE

Why not, Burke? You won't tell me yours.

PRESIDENT

I don't think you'd like them, dear.—How about a brandy, Kevin?

RAMSEY

I will if you'll have one.

ROSANNE

That's the signal for me to disappear. Alright, you two. You'll just have to get along without me. *(She gets up. KEVIN RAMSEY rises, too.)*

PRESIDENT

We won't be long, dear. *(He pours two brandies and hands one to RAMSEY.)*

ROSANNE

Take your time. You know where to find me. *(She goes out. The PRESIDENT and RAMSEY take a drink.)*

PRESIDENT

Well, Kevin, I suppose this to as good a time as any to talk a little business. You were expecting it, weren't you?

RAMSEY

Well, I was pretty certain you didn't ask me to come here just for dinner—enjoyable as it was. *(Warmly)* My God, Burke, it's good to see you.

PRESIDENT

It's good to see you, Kevin, believe me. The last time we saw each other was at the Inauguration, and we certainly didn't have the chance to talk much then. Many times I'd thought of calling you just to chat—to get your ideas. But you'll be surprised how difficult that can be when you live—here. And just as often I'd hoped to find you an office that would do justice to you. And that isn't easy—particularly when I know so well how you feel about Government service. But the time has come when I need you, need you very badly. Kevin, I want you to be my Secretary of State.

RAMSEY *(gets up and begins to pace)*

I won't say that this is a complete surprise, Burke. It's been more than a week since Callagher's untimely death—and you've been in the habit of filling your vacancies promptly. Then, on Friday, your urgent summons— Naturally, Burke, I'm deeply honored.

PRESIDENT

Yet you hesitate—

RAMSEY

Yes, Burke, I do. I've thought about it ever since I received your call. Frankly, I'd made up my mind. Then—tonight at dinner, I could sense an urgency—a strange

[Scene Five]

feeling of crisis amidst these magnificent surroundings—and I sort of wavered again. It's never easy to say no to a dear friend who needs you—particularly when he happens to be President of your country. And so I'll say to you in all frankness, I'd rather not, but I'm willing to listen.

PRESIDENT

You're as difficult as ever. Why do I always have to do a selling job on the men I really want? Is my Administration that unattractive?

RAMSEY

No, no, no. Quite the contrary. In many respects, you've done wonders. Take the reorganization of the Executive Branch, for instance—

PRESIDENT

My predecessors have made that rather easy.

RAMSEY

Precisely. But instead of continuing that disastrous trend, you've reversed it. You've cut the fat to the bone. You set an example to business that's hard to follow. Of course, you always were a topnotch administrator. As Governor, at the university—even as a young prof, your courses were a model of organization.

PRESIDENT

Alright, Kevin. But what do you consider the weakest point of my Administration?

RAMSEY

I'm inclined to say—your foreign policy. But I also know that it is the easiest to criticize, because it's the most complex aspect of our age. You want to live peacefully in a world that doesn't want to let you. As a result, you've tried to avoid confrontations at all cost. By shifting emphasis, by creating a reasonable mix of strength while keeping the door open—just in case. And—forgive me—sometimes just by ignoring realities.

PRESIDENT

(Getting up) I've played for time, Kevin, because in the last analysis, time is what it's all about. History is the record of how we've spent that time, what we've done with it. And three years of peace, in my view, are better than three years on the brink of disaster. True—for the sake of peace, one may have to borrow from the future. We have done that. But since the future is never certain, nobody knows for sure just how much. Just the same, with all due precautions taken, I've considered this a reasonable risk.

RAMSEY

You say that with a sort of finality—as if it were no longer so.

PRESIDENT

The point I want to make is that we're entering a new phase in our relations with the East where this kind of policy is no longer possible. I have every reason

[A Sitting Room in the White House]

to believe—these three years of calm are coming to an end; that we're at the threshold of new and dangerous confrontations.

RAMSEY

Can you be more specific?

PRESIDENT

I can. You've undoubtedly heard about the other side putting the squeeze on Zubaran. Their intention, of course, is to black out our most useful satellite tracking station. But what complicates matters is that, unless Zubaran does permit another power to build a station, we have at least a moral obligation to help—in the event of intimidation. And I might add, we are virtually certain that such intimidation will be forthcoming.

RAMSEY

But there's no such provision in our treaty, is there?

PRESIDENT

You're right. Unfortunately, my predecessor saw fit to give his private assurance to that effect to the Prime Minister during his state visit here five years ago.

RAMSEY

But that's not a binding commitment.

PRESIDENT

True. Nevertheless, the commitment was made, and as a result Zubaran made certain concessions to us, so that at least a moral obligation exists to honor the pledge of a former President.

RAMSEY

Do I understand you correctly: if this commitment had been incorporated in the treaty, the Senate might have rejected it?

PRESIDENT

Precisely.

RAMSEY

And I was under the apparently naive assumption that secret agreements went out of the window a hundred years ago.

PRESIDENT

Of course, even if we ignored this pledge—to assist Zubaran might be in our best interest anyway.

RAMSEY

Up to a point, perhaps.

PRESIDENT

But this is only one aspect of the situation. Our friends have been building a powerful tracking station in the Arctic.

[Scene Five]

RAMSEY

Hasn't that been public knowledge for months?

PRESIDENT

Not that the station is fully operational. And not that it is the most complex anywhere. And not that it is dead center on the North Pole. Can you imagine the advantage this gives them?

RAMSEY

But we have a tracking station in the Antarctic? *(with an afterthought)* Don't we?

PRESIDENT

Yes, we do. But nothing approaching theirs. The point of all this is that our initial advantage in the nuclear satellite system—largely due to a superior network of tracking stations, no longer exists. Their strike capability equals our strike capability—we both have the same number of satellites in orbit. Their detection system equals our detection system, except that ours is more vulnerable to political pressures, such as in Zubaran. Of course, as you know, all tracking stations have a dual purpose: one, to monitor our own, second by second, to make sure that they are on course and aren't interfered with. And two, to track theirs. The first change in course obviously could signal an attack. So, any reduction in the effectiveness of our tracking system would give them an important advantage. And that's what they're after.

RAMSEY

I'm beginning to understand their timing.

PRESIDENT

They appear to be ahead of schedule—technologically. And as if further proof of this were needed, we've just confirmed that they have detonated a thermonuclear device at a distance of 17 million miles from earth—in direct violation of the nuclear space ban treaty of 1992. A provocation that does nothing but to signify defiance. All this is, of course, perfectly coordinated.

RAMSEY

To hit us in the face at a time when we're occupied with a Presidential election, and the primary just around the corner.

PRESIDENT

I want you to know that there are less than thirty people in this country who know what I've just told you.

RAMSEY

Do you have to run that tight a shop?

PRESIDENT

Because it's vitally important that they don't know what we know about them.

[A Sitting Room in the White House]

RAMSEY

But why haven't we put some pressure on them?

PRESIDENT

We've tried that in the past. It only strengthened their resolve. Even so, according to our best intelligence estimates, they weren't supposed to have caught up for at least another fifteen months.

RAMSEY

And we put all our eggs in one basket on the basis of an intelligence estimate? How would we have utilized these additional fifteen months—if we had them?

PRESIDENT

Well, for one thing, our technology isn't standing still either. Refinements are constantly in the works—particularly in our knockout capability. That is our ability to knock their satellites out of orbit and into space individually. A very tricky business. For another, in fifteen months, we'd be in a more stable situation politically. With the next President—whoever that might be—still in the first year of his term.

RAMSEY

But haven't we taken an unnecessary gamble with our security?

PRESIDENT

Not in my judgment. After all, there are no alternate plans for a situation like this.

RAMSEY

Should we have let things go this far? For the sake of avoiding a confrontation, haven't we just postponed it and increased its severity when it does come? Were three years of calm worth all that? Have we assessed our national aims? Have we examined what we want and where we're going? Do we know now?

PRESIDENT

In a way, yes. Can you imagine what would have happened if we had to face one international conflict after another—if we had stumbled from one crisis to the next? If we had to double or triple our defense budget at the expense of domestic programs? Why, this country would have been turned into an armed camp. Our personal liberties would have been surrendered, one by one, in favor of even greater Government control. We would virtually be living under martial law—with most of our Constitutional rights suspended—permanently. I wanted no part of this. Do you?

RAMSEY

Of course not. But what's the alternative? Aren't we making a dangerous sacrifice for the sake of Jeffersonian liberalism that certainly wasn't designed for this day and age? After all, our first concern must be for the safety of the Republic. What good is it to safeguard our individual freedom only to lose the whole country?

[Scene Five]

PRESIDENT

You surprise me, Kevin. I didn't expect you to share that slogan with the arch conservatives. If you forgive me for sounding like an old teacher again—it is far easier to lose this country through deterioration from within than through enemy action. And it is not simply a matter of priorities. Do we cease to be a free people first and then defend ourselves against another form of totalitarianism? Or do we try to preserve what freedom we have salvaged from the past half-century of turmoil and show the world that our system is the better one—because we are a happier people?

RAMSEY

It's incredible, Burke. All these years in politics haven't changed you. You're the same incorrigible idealist you were as a young prof teaching kids that America meant to give each and everyone of us the inalienable right to pursue happiness as he saw it. *(In a different tone—warmly)* You're right, of course. We have changed, when we shouldn't have. Too many of us have forgotten what we once were.

PRESIDENT

How much so, I was reminded only a day or two ago by this young fellow Beaumont who was arrested for saying what most of our people had once considered their heritage. Can you imagine something like the Public Dissent bill having had a ghost of a chance of passing when we were young? And now, the majority actually seems worried that I might veto the bill!

RAMSEY

Yes, times certainly have changed. Security is the issue overriding everything. The people feel threatened and they want protection from aggression. And you can't really blame them for that.

PRESIDENT

Yes, and protection from crime, protection from every kind of want, protection from sickness, protection from pollution, protection from economic fluctuation. And now protection from dissent, in case somebody has still guts enough to disagree with this great protective wall the Government has become.

RAMSEY

You puzzle me, Burke. You've always favored social programs—

PRESIDENT

Up to a point, yes. But that point has long been exceeded. We've provided far beyond the basic needs of the people. So much so in fact, that the people have now become over-anxious in wanting to protect the proverbial goose.

RAMSEY

I'm glad to hear you talk like that.

[A Sitting Room in the White House]

PRESIDENT

To speak one's mind has long been a rare luxury for a politician. My views don't seem to be terribly popular these days. That, in a nutshell, is why I may be having a problem in the national primary.

RAMSEY

The threat doesn't seem to come as much from the opposition party, as it does from Carrister. Do you have to put up with him?

PRESIDENT

Dumping him would only help his cause. He's done some spectacular things in law enforcement. And as you know, he was mainly responsible for last year's tough crime bill. He's caught the mood of the people, and he's given them what they want. But he's got no scruples whatever, and his ambition would make Caesar look bashful by comparison. Yes, I'm afraid I'll have to put up with him.

RAMSEY

But his principal issue appears to be public dissent. If you'd sign that bill, you'd go a long way toward removing that issue. Every day you're delaying it gives him additional ammunition.

PRESIDENT

If you were in my shoes, would you sign it?

RAMSEY

If I wanted to be reelected—yes. It isn't what the founding fathers may have envisioned, but neither are these times. This is a far more dangerous age than they could have ever imagined. We're living under the constant threat of annihilation.

PRESIDENT

And so the end justifies the means? I wish I could be comfortable as a pragmatist.

RAMSEY

I'm not saying it's pleasant. But surely you've done things distasteful to you before.

PRESIDENT

Political life is a constant compromise. But I've never considered surrendering basic principles as something that can be compromised.

(Suddenly the lights dim, then brighten again in a repeated pattern. There is also the shrill emergency ring of a telephone. The PRESIDENT rushes to answer it.)

Yes, yes, General. Are you absolutely certain? Alright, I'm going to the ready-room right now. Alright.

(He hangs up. ROSANNE rushes in, some knitting in hand.)

There may be an emergency. You stay here, both of you. *(He rushes out.)*

[Scene Five]

RAMSEY

What on earth could be the matter? (*ROSANNE shrugs and sits down.*) Isn't there something, we can do?

ROSANNE

No, Kevin.

RAMSEY

Has this sort of thing happened before?

ROSANNE

No.

RAMSEY

But there must be something we can do.

ROSANNE

What?

RAMSEY

(*calming down*) Well, I must say, I certainly admire your calm. I suppose, one can learn to live with crises.

ROSANNE

Can one?

RAMSEY

You have. Haven't you?

ROSANNE

I've learned to accept them. Which isn't quite the same thing. (*She begins to knit quietly. RAMSEY goes to the liquor cabinet.*)

RAMSEY

Do you mind if I have another brandy?

ROSANNE

Please help yourself.

RAMSEY

Would you like one? (*He pours himself a brandy.*)

ROSANNE

No thanks. (*RAMSEY sits down again.*) You know, while you two were talking, I had the news on. The Federation of Government Employees has just voted to strike.

RAMSEY

Damn 'em!

[A Sitting Room in the White House]

ROSANNE

I can't help thinking—let's hope they'll have the opportunity.

RAMSEY

What on earth do you mean, Rosanne?

ROSANNE

Let's hope there'll be a next week.

RAMSEY

Good God, Rosanne! Of course, there'll be a next week. And a next year. And a next century. Really, you of all people!

ROSANNE

Well, let's hope so. (*After a brief pause.*) Do you know what a strike of Government workers means to the country?

RAMSEY

Do I! I haven't forgotten the last one—when was it—six years ago? It'll paralyze everything.

ROSANNE

Yes. And when everybody runs out of food and water, power, transportation and what have you, they'll get a ten or fifteen percent wage increase. And everybody will be satisfied.

RAMSEY

For a while.

ROSANNE

I wish—just once—people would stop asking for more, and everybody would take stock and count their blessings. And be grateful.

RAMSEY

That doesn't seem to be in the nature of man, does it? (*The PRESIDENT returns. He looks pale and shaken, RAMSEY jumps up. ROSANNE runs toward him. He puts his arm around her.*)

PRESIDENT

Thank goodness, it was just a tracking error. One of their satellites disappeared from the master radar screen for less than a minute before it was picked up by another station. But it could have been worse—

RAMSEY

They wouldn't start anything without any reason. And there hasn't been the slightest provocation on our part. Has there?

PRESIDENT

Not in our judgment. But then, these are strange times. Pour me another brandy, Kevin, will you? (*RAMSEY quickly does and hands it to the President.*)

[Scene Five]

Perhaps now you'll appreciate the importance of our tracking stations. (*He drinks.*)

RAMSEY

I certainly do. Not that I've ever underrated their importance.

PRESIDENT

Anyway, old man, the next Secretary of State has quite a task cut out for him. I won't ask for your decision now. You'd better sleep on it. (*Getting up.*) I think, we all could do with some rest. Tomorrow will be another day. Thank God.

BLACKOUT.

**SCENE SIX: A REFERENCE LIBRARY ROOM IN
THE JUSTICE DEPARTMENT.**

Stacks of books and file cabinets cover the walls, ROBERT ASCANIAN, a man in his early thirties, sits at a table thumbing through a legal volume, as A GUARD enters.

GUARD (trying to get his attention)

Mr. Ascanian!

ASCANIAN (looking up)

Yes, what is it?

GUARD

I was told to deliver this to you. *(He hands him an envelope.)*

ASCANIAN

How did you know I was here?

GUARD

Your secretary told me. She thought it might be urgent.

ASCANIAN

(opens the envelope and looks at the papers inside) It's sometimes downright annoying to have such an efficient secretary. But she's right. This is important. Thank you.

GUARD

Yes, sir. *(He is about to leave.)*

ASCANIAN

Oh, officer. Just a moment.

GUARD

Yes, sir?

ASCANIAN

What room number is this?

GUARD

I—I don't know, sir.

ASCANIAN

How did you find me then?

GUARD

Well, your secretary said you'd be in the reference library on the west corridor—

ASCANIAN

But this room is not marked as reference library. It has only a number. Wait just a moment. *(He picks up the telephone on the table and pushes four digits.)*

[Scene Six]

Doris? Did you send a guard to bring me an envelope here to the reference room?
I see. No. Thank you. (*He hangs up.*) Let me see your I.D.

GUARD

Sir?

ASCANIAN

You heard me. Your I.D. (*The door opens and ROLAND CARRISTER enters.*)

CARRISTER

That won't be necessary. Good work, Robert. One can never be too careful. (*to the GUARD*) You may go, Carson. But in future remember the room number before you enter.

GUARD

Yes, sir. (*He goes out. CARRISTER locks the door behind him.*)

CARRISTER

That was that.

ASCANIAN

May I ask, sir, how you knew I was here?

CARRISTER

That's enough, Robert. You've passed. Did you see what was in the envelope?

ASCANIAN

(*looking at the papers*) Notes, proposals—I haven't read them yet.

CARRISTER

You recognize the handwriting?

ASCANIAN

Yes. It's Beaumont's. (*reading aloud*) An outline for a proposed amendment to the Constitution of the United States—

CARRISTER

Yes, nothing less. You want to tell me, Robert, that this in itself is not illegal. You're right. But consider the circumstances. This isn't just an academic exercise. He's submitting this directly to, and at the request of, none other than the Chief Executive. Are you beginning to see?

ASCANIAN

I'm not quite sure—

CARRISTER

Well, the President took a solemn oath to protect the Constitution. As it was written. Any proposed amendments, as you very well know, must be initiated by Congress. Therefore, would you consider it proper to discuss any proposed revision with the likes of Beaumont? I'll leave it to your sometimes exiguous imagination to figure out just what that can mean.

[A Reference Library Room in the Justice Department]

ASCANIAN

But the originals of these—proposals are still in Beaumont's hands, and there's been no delivery—

CARRISTER

Of course not. What you have there is just a draft. However, the completed proposal will be delivered to the President. For which purposes Mr. Beaumont has obtained an appointment tomorrow at 1600. In other words, Robert, it is reasonable to assume that these proposals were requested, or even suggested, by the President. And this could be the opening of a most interesting case. As one of the most promising members of my staff, can you suggest the substance of the charge?

ASCANIAN

In a case of such prominence, I'd say the evidence is a bit scant for a conspiracy charge—

CARRISTER

Conspiracy? Robert? How can such a thing enter your mind. I wouldn't dream of it. No, no, no. But consider this: here we have a man, a born agitator, a man of no substance, a man of dubious morals who considers concubinage a more desirable state than matrimony, a man who exerts a dangerous influence on the minds and mores of our youth—a man who, were it not for the absence of a pen stroke, would be in prison at this very moment awaiting trial for a felony carrying a minimum sentence of five years. This man, by a quirk of fate, finds himself before the President. Is he remorseful? No. Does he swear off his dangerous activities? No. But is he planning further incitement of public dissent? Yes. Do they include an attack against the Constitution? Yes. And what is the reaction of the President to this man? Does he condemn him? Does he even chide him? No. He offers him a job! And when this man does not accept, he suggests that he submit to him his proposals in writing. He promises to read them, to study their content for possible application to his policies, perhaps even to restructure some of the pillars of Government. I ask you—is this man fit to hold the highest office in the land?—That, young friend, is our charge.

ASCANIAN

Brilliant, sir. Hold the President responsible for everything Beaumont does or might do. But what about Beaumont himself?

CARRISTER

He's of no consequence. He'll dig his own grave somehow. The moment that this bill becomes the law, he'll be in prison.

ASCANIAN

But what if Anderson does veto it?

CARRISTER

Then he might as well forget about another term. Then we're rid of him. So you see, theoretically we can't lose. The trouble, however, is the same as with any

[Scene Six]

other case. We can't be sure until the verdict is in. So we must do everything we can to make sure.

ASCANIAN (looking at the envelope again)

Sir, this letter was sent to me by Norman Deak. May I ask how you got hold of it?

CARRISTER

My dear fellow! This affair is far too important to entrust to a single individual.

ASCANIAN

Then have you had direct contact with Deak?

CARRISTER

Of course not. He reports to you. He and the girl are your responsibility.

ASCANIAN

Then I'm afraid, sir, you may not be aware of some unfavorable news.

CARRISTER

What's that?

ASCANIAN

Deak contacted me less than an hour ago. He says the girl no longer obeys orders. She refuses to give us any further information on Beaumont.

CARRISTER

This is incredible! Hasn't she been warned of the consequences of such insubordination?

ASCANIAN

She says she doesn't care. She wants out. She says we can do whatever we want. It doesn't matter to her. The only thing important to her is Beaumont. She's in love with that guy.

CARRISTER

Love? How absurd can you get? Come off it, Ascanian! This is not a chapter from a Victorian novel. She's a highly trained agent. She's never botched an assignment. She knows what's at stake. And what's more, she came highly recommended by you.

ASCANIAN

I didn't bring her in, sir. Norman Deak did.

CARRISTER

Are you denying that you recommended her?

ASCANIAN

(meekly) No, sir.

[A Reference Library Room in the Justice Department]

CARRISTER

Then you're also responsible for her performance.

ASCANIAN

What can I do, sir?

CARRISTER

Make her deliver. That's all. No more and no less.

ASCANIAN

I'm afraid from way things look now, that would appear impossible. Deak says he's tried everything—threats, intimidation, promises—

CARRISTER

Alright, then you take over. And for the sake of your career, I hope you'll be more successful. We've spent months on this case. The timing was perfect. Everything worked like a clock. And now this! It's unbelievable! Someone else must be behind it. Have you looked at it from that angle?

ASCANIAN

We know of absolutely nobody who could have interfered.

CARRISTER

Well, take another look. Double check her associations. Have her tailed. You ought to know what to do.

ASCANIAN

Alright, sir. I'll see what I can do.

CARRISTER

Why wasn't I notified the moment Deak informed you of this?

ASCANIAN

I was going to very shortly. Just as soon as I got through checking here for precedents on an idea I had.

CARRISTER

What's that?

ASCANIAN

If she refuses to complete her assignment, we can hold her in protective custody as a hostile Government witness. There is a precedent in the case of...

CARRISTER

Not a chance. I don't want her involved. All I want her to do is to obey orders. I'm sure you'll be able to make her understand that. As a last resort, make it clear we could reveal her true identity to Beaumont. I doubt very much if that would help her romance.

[Scene Six]

ASCANIAN

I'll try my very best, sir. I don't suppose you've ever seen her. She's really a knockout.

CARRISTER

So I've heard. What do you suppose makes a fellow like Beaumont tick?

ASCANIAN

The desire to be different, perhaps. To stand out in the crowd—a sense of daring—

CARRISTER

Maybe. But I think there's something else, something more significant. This concern for the individual, for his rights and what have you—makes me wonder. Of course, we're all individuals, and we all want our rights. But as civilized men, we've chosen to surrender a few for the sake of a stronger entity. We've done this in the knowledge that only as a strong society can we survive in this world. And so, our intelligence, our will to live, tell us constantly to become stronger. And yet there are these mavericks—these remnants from another age—who don't want us to be a strong society. They want to survive as individuals, even when they know full and well they can't. I therefore question if these people really care about life—if they really want to survive.

ASCANIAN

If they wouldn't, why do they spread their ideas? Why do they want to convert others to their thinking?

CARRISTER

Everyone who has any idea at all wants others to accept it. It reassures them, affirms their ego. And this kind of liberalism is particularly deceptive. It caters to our egos. It tells us how important we are as individuals, when we're not. When our strength is reflected only in our ultimate stature as a nation. And it is precisely that strength they're trying to undermine.

ASCANIAN

Life on their own terms? And if they can't have it—yes, perhaps, that is a sort of decadence—

CARRISTER

That's why they're dangerous and must be stopped.—Well, I must be off. (*He unlocks the door.*) You wait here for at least five minutes before you leave, understood? Be sure to keep me posted on your progress with our ladyfriend. And remember, we won't take no for an answer. (*He goes out quickly.*)

BLACKOUT.

SCENE SEVEN: THE PRESIDENT'S OFFICE.

It is 11 a.m. The PRESIDENT is sitting on the sofa. KEVIN RAMSEY is pacing back and forth.

RAMSEY

Yes, you're eloquent, Burke. Although listening to you doesn't do much for my peace of mind, I'm afraid. But how can I say no to you?— There is one thing, though. If we're going to work effectively on a new direction in our foreign policy, we need more than a few months. And that means you mustn't jeopardize your chances for reelection by an intransigent adherence to principles—good or bad.

PRESIDENT

Is this a condition to your acceptance?

RAMSEY

No, sir. It is my first recommendation to you as a member of your Administration. It's going to be difficult enough trying to forge a new posture in four years. It would be sheer folly trying to do it in a few months.

PRESIDENT

My signature on that blasted bill—is that your price? *(Then softer)* No, that was unfair. Your motives deserve better than that.

RAMSEY

I think once that bill is out of the way, you've eliminated Carrister's challenge. And you're also wrecking their hopes for a coalition between his supporters and the opposition party. In fact, I think it would be a fatal blow to Senator Caldwell's candidacy as well.

PRESIDENT

It isn't as simple as all that.

RAMSEY

I think it is. Without that bill, they haven't got a single major issue. You know that better than I.

PRESIDENT

If we're able to prevent a full-fledged collision with our enemies. And that is a big if.

RAMSEY

Then we'll just have to get to work and start doing something about it, Mr. President.

PRESIDENT

Now you're talking. Alright, I'll send your nomination to the Senate right away. I don't expect any difficulties, I presume you'll want to make the customary arrangements and let a trustee handle your investments.

[Scene Seven]

RAMSEY

Right. I'll let my attorneys look after that.

PRESIDENT

Good. McDonald is waiting to see me. He might as well be the first to know.

RAMSEY

Will there be any ruffled feelings?

PRESIDENT

No. He knows I hadn't considered him. He's a capable administrator but he's not cut out for the top job. Besides, in this Administration, the second man is running the departmental operations.

(He buzzes and a moment later NELSON YOUNG enters.)

Nelson, please see to it that the paperwork is prepared at once nominating Mr. Kevin Ramsey as Secretary of State. You have a background brief and all that?

NELSON

Yes, sir. Are there any special qualifications you want to stress, sir?

PRESIDENT

You might say that in addition to being a prominent industrialist, Mr. Ramsey is a world traveler, philanthropist, and a life-long observer of international affairs. He's written two books on world problems, one of which won the Bergmann Award. Above all, and don't forget to say this, he is a dedicated and patriotic American.

NELSON

Yes, sir. Do you want any mention made of your long friendship?

PRESIDENT

Definitely. I'm proud of it. We've been close friends since our undergraduate days. Mr. Ramsey will have an important contribution to make at this critical juncture. I know that because I know him so well.

NELSON

Yes, Mr. President. *(to RAMSEY)* May I offer my sincere congratulations, sir.

RAMSEY

Thank you, Mr. Young. I appreciate it.

PRESIDENT

Have Mr. McDonald come in, Nelson.

NELSON

Yes, sir. *(He goes out.)*

PRESIDENT

Now then, Kevin, we might as well get down to business. And I regret to say it is very serious business. *(CARTER MACDONALD enters.)*

[The President's Office]

MACDONALD

Good morning, Mr. President.

PRESIDENT

Hello, Carter. Before we start, I'd like you to meet Kevin Ramsey whom I've just nominated to be the new Secretary—

MACDONALD

Great, sir. (*Going toward RAMSEY and holding out his hand.*) I'm very glad, Mr. Ramsey. Congratulations.

RAMSEY (taking his hand)

Thank you, Mr. MacDonald. Thank you very much.

PRESIDENT

I'm sure you two will get along very well.

RAMSEY

I'm convinced of that.

MACDONALD

You'll have my wholehearted cooperation, Mr. Ramsey.

RAMSEY

I'll need it. From what I hear, what we're faced with isn't exactly a Sunday picnic.

MACDONALD

No, sir. It is not.

PRESIDENT

Alright, Carter. You might as well go ahead with what you've got.

MACDONALD

Very well, Mr. President. We have new evidence of direct negotiations between the other side and the Government of Zubaran.

PRESIDENT

What kind of evidence?

MACDONALD

Well, point one: more than a hundred scientific and engineering people have arrived in Zubaran during the past two days. They've checked in at the local hotels for an indefinite stay, yet the Government has refused to admit they're even there. Point two: they're currently looking through an intermediary for a larger building to serve as their embassy. Point three: no Zubaranian official has accepted our invitations to the anniversary gala. Point four: a communications vessel, escorted by a large cruiser, has been sighted off the coast of Zubaran for the past two days. Personnel, both in and out of uniform, were seen on shore leave, yet again no acknowledgment in the press or otherwise. And finally, point

[Scene Seven]

five: this morning, a government car was seen driving up to their embassy and three officials, though not top echelon, went inside.

PRESIDENT

What do you think, Kevin?

RAMSEY

I'd say that's pretty convincing evidence of pressure. What have we done so far to counter it?

PRESIDENT

Until now, we've limited ourselves strictly to observation—and a minor, and evidently not very successful, diplomatic maneuver: an anniversary party.

RAMSEY

I see. May I speak frankly?

PRESIDENT

Of course. That's what I want you to do.

RAMSEY

In light of what Mr. MacDonald has just reported—and what you've told me about developments elsewhere, I would urge strong and immediate countermeasures in all areas where we've been challenged. Naturally, I'd have to know what we're able to commit right now, but this much I can say: if they got a hundred men into Zubaran in the last two days, then let's fly two hundred in. If they have two vessels offshore, let's order four there. If they're looking for a bigger building, we can find a still bigger one. And let us make it clear to the whole world that we have a treaty with Zubaran. And because of it, we have a perfect right to have a tracking station there. The other side has not.

PRESIDENT

How do you feel about this, Carter?

MACDONALD

It'll mean the end of the calm seas, Mr. President. But whatever storm may come—it is brewing already. We've got to get ready for it. I think I'd be inclined to go along with Mr. Ramsey.

PRESIDENT (gets up and paces)

I hope that both of you fully visualize the consequences of this proposal. We are headed for a confrontation. And after this, there'll be another someplace else, and another and another. Do you realize what this will do to conditions at home? It'll cause all kinds of unrest, a clamor for more defense spending, new appropriations, a budget deficit, a new wave of inflation, cutbacks in domestic programs—with economic dislocations and all the rest to follow. We've barely had a chance to lick our wounds from the disasters of the nineties, and here you're suggesting we go looking for new ones. And they'll be deep—

[The President's Office]

RAMSEY

What other choice have we got, Mr. President?

PRESIDENT

I don't know, Kevin. I'm not sure we've got any.

MACDONALD

I believe it important to remember that this situation is just one of several well-coordinated provocations to test us. Their timing indicates great confidence that they've caught up with us technologically well ahead of schedule. Needless to say, they've timed this to coincide with the most vulnerable period in our four-year Presidential cycle.

RAMSEY

And let me remind you once again, Mr. President, as far as unrest here at home is concerned, your signature on a certain bill would go a long way toward minimizing that.

PRESIDENT

You know what you're implying, don't you? That my policies have come home to roost!

RAMSEY

No, sir. You've been perfectly justified in taking a calculated risk to maintain peace. You're still doing it. Only the rules of the game are being changed. Because, obviously the other side doesn't want to abide by the old ones.

PRESIDENT

Yes, yes. I'm well aware of it.— I called you, Kevin, because I wanted the advice of a sound, intelligent outsider I could trust. Well, I'm getting it. And I can't find any good reason to disagree with it.— Very well, then. I'm going to call Defense in on this. (*On the communications box*) Nelson, I want to see General Zellerbach here in an hour, and Undersecretary Collins as well.

NELSON YOUNG'S VOICE (*on the speaker*)

Yes, sir. Shall I postpone the meeting with the International Trade Delegation?

PRESIDENT

Yes, by all means.

NELSON'S VOICE

How about Representative Bergstrom's appointment at two?

PRESIDENT

Reschedule it, to be on the safe side.

NELSON'S VOICE

Alright, Mr. President. Will you see Senator Caldwell? He's waiting.

[Scene Seven]

PRESIDENT

Yes, have him come in. *(Be shuts the box off.)* Alright, Carter. Be back here in an hour, ready for some action.

MACDONALD

Yes, Mr. President. *(He goes out.)*

PRESIDENT

You wait in my study, Kevin. I want you and Senator Caldwell to meet. I'll buzz you when we're ready.

(RAMSEY goes into the President's study. SENATOR CALDWELL enters through the main door.)

SENATOR CALDWELL

Mr. President. I'm glad to see you.

PRESIDENT (rises briefly and shakes hands with him)

Glad to see, you, Senator. Please sit down. Would you care for some coffee?

CALDWELL

No, thank you. I asked for an urgent appointment five days ago. So, if you don't mind, I'll come right to the point.

PRESIDENT

Please do.

CALDWELL

There've been rumblings—from several sources—that foreign submarines are in the Gulf of Mexico. These submarines are said to be of the latest design and carry all kind of electronic gear. Yet the Defense Department officially denies their presence.

PRESIDENT

There have been rumors to that effect, on and off, for months, Senator.

CALDWELL

I'm sadly aware of that. But that does not answer my question. Can you look me squarely in the eyes, Mr. President, and tell me that there are no submarines off our shores in the Gulf of Mexico?

PRESIDENT

Senator, there're all kinds of ships in the Gulf, as there are in all international waters, and they have a right to be there. We ourselves have both merchant and naval vessels in virtually every corner of the globe—

CALDWELL

Mr. President, I'm not talking about generalities. I'm talking specifically about the presence of submarines of a hostile nation in our own backyard, in our territorial waters. And with all due respect to your high office, I demand a confirmation or a denial of this.

[The President's Office]

PRESIDENT

That sounds like an ultimatum of some kind, Senator. I've never accepted an ultimatum from anybody, and I'm not inclined to do so now.

CALDWELL

Then I interpret this as a refusal to discuss with a ranking member of the United States Senate a matter of crucial importance to the security of the country.

PRESIDENT

You can interpret it any way you want. But don't attribute any of your interpretations to me—or as facts.

CALDWELL

Mr. President, we've had differences before, but never on so vital a matter. What is involved here could very well affect our survival, and this must transcend political considerations. Believe me, sir, I do not want to accuse you of gambling—with the security of our nation.

PRESIDENT

That's very generous of you, Senator. I don't think I need to remind you that the protection and security of the nation is my prime responsibility. I take that very seriously. It is my constant concern and foremost on my mind. I shall discharge my Constitutional responsibilities as I always have. But I'll be damned if I allow this country to be wrecked—if I stand idly by while everything we ever stood for is destroyed by a wave of hysteria—generated by a small clique for obvious reasons of their own—under the pretense of greater security and protection.

CALDWELL

I'm deeply sorry, sir, if you can't distinguish between political gambits and genuine concern for our survival. But I would not fulfill my responsibilities as my party's standard bearer, if I would not urge you—yes, beseech you—once more to be frank with me and to discuss candidly our military posture in this dangerous age.

PRESIDENT

Senator, the Committees on Armed Service and Foreign Relations are frequently being briefed by Cabinet officers on all major questions affecting our posture. The record of these briefings is available to you—

CALDWELL

That is not enough. Besides, the last such briefing took place more than a month ago. In the meantime, we've lost a Secretary of State, the Secretary of Defense is laid up in the hospital. I'm sure their deputies are trying to do their best. But is their best adequate to these new challenges that you're unwilling to discuss with me? And why, Mr. President, haven't you seen fit to fill the vacancy in the State Department? There's been ample time.

PRESIDENT

My nomination will reach the Senate before noon today.

[Scene Seven]

CALDWELL

May I inquire whom you have chosen for this important office?

PRESIDENT (*pressing a buzzer*)

I'll go one step further, Senator. I'll have you meet him.

(*KEVIN RAMSEY reenters from the President's study. SENATOR CALDWELL rises.*)

Senator, I'd like you to meet Mr. Kevin Ramsey, my nominee for Secretary of State. Kevin, meet Senator Caldwell.

CALDWELL

Delighted, Mr. Ramsey, delighted. (*They shake hands.*) A fine choice, Mr. President, if I may say so.

RAMSEY

I'm happy to meet you, Senator Caldwell. One of the stalwart watchdogs of the Republic, if you don't mind that description.

CALDWELL

Not at all. I'm proud of it. Even if the President probably considers it a damned nuisance.

PRESIDENT

Far from it, Senator. Our principal difference centers around a priority of objectives. You put security above all else. To me the preservation of a free society—relatively speaking—is the most important issue.

CALDWELL

What chance is there for freedom, if we're wiped out?

PRESIDENT

I know, Senator. I'm familiar with all the arguments. But if we succumb to totalitarianism out of fear, then our enemies will have accomplished their goal of destroying us without firing one missile. Can you predict a future for two blocks of autocratic societies sitting on their nuclear weapons glowering at each other? There just isn't any. And I'm not going to aid my political opponents in bringing this about.

CALDWELL

May I direct a question at Mr. Ramsey?

PRESIDENT

Of course.

CALDWELL

As nominee for Secretary of State, my colleagues will want to know your views on—certain dangerous situations. As the minority leader, I think it appropriate for me to ask now what action you would propose, if—shall we say—submarines of an unfriendly power were discovered off our shores, for example, in the Gulf of Mexico.

[The President's Office]

RAMSEY

Well, I presume, of course, that this is a hypothetical situation. But if it should ever arise, I would urge the President to take such prompt and effective steps as are necessary to safeguard our shores from reconnaissance or any other kind of activity.

CALDWELL

Very good. Can you be more specific as to what kind of steps you would propose?

RAMSEY

I'd have to know the exact circumstances, of course, but it would include military action, if required to get them out of our waters.

CALDWELL

Very good indeed Mr. Ramsey. Are you perhaps aware that this situation may not be entirely hypothetical?

RAMSEY

You mean—that there are submarines off our shores?

CALDWELL

Exactly. I came to see the President for that very purpose, but he refuses to confirm or deny this fact.

PRESIDENT

I thought I made myself clear, Senator. I have nothing further to say on the subject, and I consider it extremely inappropriate trying to wangle any information out of Mr. Ramsey.

CALDWELL

You see, Mr. Ramsey, what we're up against? I'm sorry, Mr. President, that you are taking this stand. I don't consider it in the best interest of the country. But if this is your position, sir, I have nothing further to say. Good day, Mr. Ramsey, and good luck to you.

RAMSEY

Thank you, Senator. And a good day to you.

CALDWELL

Goodbye, Mr. President.

PRESIDENT

Goodbye, Senator. (*Exit SENATOR CALDWELL.*) Well, that was that. We'll just have time for a quick snack before the Defense people get here.— What's the matter, Kevin? You didn't let that old buzzard get to you?

RAMSEY

Is there something to what he said? Are there any submarines off our coast?

[Scene Seven]

PRESIDENT (getting up)
(solemnly) This is top secret for the time being, and you're not to breathe a word of it, even during closed Senate confirmation hearings. Yes, we spotted six of their submarines, operating from Tampa all the way to Corpus Christi.

RAMSEY
And what have we done about it?

PRESIDENT
We've kept them under strict observation. We've monitored their every move. Their mission is clearly electronic surveillance. Quite possibly in preparation for setting up a floating tracking station.

RAMSEY
And that's all we've done?

PRESIDENT
They were in international waters. Until Sunday, that is, when one of them crossed the twelve mile limit. It was promptly challenged by a patrolboat. Yet, instead of responding, it fired a rocket—sinking our ship. Six of our men drowned. The rest were picked up by another vessel.

RAMSEY (outraged)
But this is an act of war!

PRESIDENT
I'm well aware of it. Sunday night—when we lost track of one of their satellites for a minute—my immediate fear was that it wasn't the only one.

RAMSEY
But in heaven's name, with all their other moves around the world, doesn't it look to you that they're trying to squeeze us into a corner? That we're in an acute emergency calling for the strongest kind of measures?

PRESIDENT
It does, Kevin. Very much so. That's why I called you. That's why I need you. Come on, you'll get a more complete picture at the briefing.
(He takes RAMSEY by the arm as they go into his study.)

CURTAIN.

SCENE EIGHT: THE PRESIDENT'S OFFICE

It is nearly 4 p.m. of the same day. NELSON YOUNG is removing sheets from pads on the President's desk, tears them and puts them into a special slot behind the desk, HELEN FERGUSON enters with a carafe of coffee which she places on the sideboard.

NELSON

I don't think anyone will be having coffee. We're hours behind schedule.

HELEN

Well, it'll be here, just in case. *(As she gets to the door, she turns around)* I don't suppose there's much of a chance I can leave by about eighteen hundred, is there, Nelson?

NELSON

I wouldn't count on it, Helen. It looks like a long evening.

HELEN

My sister and her husband are in town. I'd better call, so they won't expect me for dinner. *(She goes out. The door from the President's study opens and the PRESIDENT emerges, followed by a group of seven grim-faced men, including KEVIN RAMSEY, CARTER MACDONALD AND GENERAL ZELLERBACH. All but the PRESIDENT and RAMSEY carry briefcases. The PRESIDENT goes to his desk; the others stand in expectation of a statement. NELSON YOUNG goes out quietly.)*

PRESIDENT

Well, gentlemen, I think we've cleared the air. Now the moment you get any reaction whatever, let me know. At any hour of the day or night. I'll be expecting it, and we'll take it from there. Just one brief personal remark: because we all know what is at stake, I deeply appreciate the confidence you have so clearly shown. It means a great deal to me. Thank you all very much.

GENERAL ZELLERBACH

Yes, sir.

MACDONALD

Yes, Mr. President. *(The others mumble similar words, more or less in unison, then file out through the main door.)*

PRESIDENT

Oh Kevin, wait just a minute. *(Then, after the others have gone out.)* It's good to have you on my side, Kevin.

RAMSEY

(after a brief hesitation) I think, during the past four hours I must have aged ten years. Tell me one thing, Burke, what sort of advice did Gallagher ever give you?

[Scene Eight]

PRESIDENT

Jim Gallagher was a marvelous human being and a fine statesman. In that order.

RAMSEY

Evidently he was also a hopeless optimist. And a Secretary of State simply can't afford being that. Maybe the realization of this contributed to his untimely death. *(More friendly)* My God, Burke, does anyone in this country really have any idea of what responsibility you bear—what an inhuman task the Presidency is? Here we are, almost three hundred million strong, and we elect one man to carry out our national destiny—and then leave him alone with his burden. Why, it's barbaric.

PRESIDENT

It's worked in the past, hasn't it, more or less? But then, no time is ever like the present.

RAMSEY

You can say that again. It'll take several miracles to work ourselves out of this situation.

PRESIDENT

Give it a little time—you'll get used to crises. You'll learn to live with them.

RAMSEY

Yes, but how do you sleep at night?

PRESIDENT

Not too badly, most of the time. When you're tired enough, you'll sleep. And remember, the people on the other side probably aren't any more comfortable.

RAMSEY

At least they have a division of responsibility. They share the load.

PRESIDENT

In the final analysis, any man—after searching his soul—does what he considers to be the right thing at the time. That's all he can do. We happen to entrust that final judgment to one man. The other side evidently doesn't trust any one individual that far.

RAMSEY

That's our strength. *(Then, warmly)* And with you at the helm—that's our good fortune.

PRESIDENT

(visibly moved) Thank you, Kevin.

RAMSEY

Well, you must be hours behind in your schedule. I'll be upstairs if you want me. *(RAMSEY goes out quickly. The PRESIDENT mops his brow with a handkerchief, then buzzes. NELSON YOUNG enters promptly.)*

[The President's Office]

PRESIDENT

Did Secretary Field get my message?

NELSON

Yes, sir. He interrupted the session and read it to the negotiators. He said it had considerable emotional impact. But he also said that the union people seem to be under such pressure that, unless you, sir, communicated the facts to the nation at large, the rank and file would feel they'd been sold out.

PRESIDENT

That's exactly what I don't want to do. It is absolutely vital that we avoid any public excitement in the next few days which could be miscalculated by the enemy. Nelson, I want you to go to Secretary Field and tell him some kind of an agreement must be reached without complete surrender on his part. And if it can't be reached by midnight—then the strike has got to be postponed for at least ten days in the national interest.

NELSON

That argument has been used before, sir. It may not work so close to the deadline.

PRESIDENT

Then he's got to make it clear that there are aspects in the international situation at this moment making it imperative to avoid a strike. Damn it, he knows that. Why can't he persuade anybody just once?

NELSON

Alright, sir. I'll drop over right now.

PRESIDENT

See what you can do, Nelson. I've got too much on my mind right now.

NELSON

Yes, sir. If you like, I'll get rid of Daniel Beaumont.

PRESIDENT

Is he waiting?

NELSON

Yes, sir.

PRESIDENT

I'll see him. It'll do me good to talk with him. Like a breath of fresh air in this explosive atmosphere. (*NELSON goes out. The buzzer rings.*) Yes?

HELEN'S VOICE (on the speaker)

The Attorney General is here. He asks to see you for a moment on a most urgent matter—

PRESIDENT

In regard to what?

[Scene Eight]

HELEN'S VOICE

He won't tell me, sir—

PRESIDENT

He'd better. Nothing is ever that urgent. He's got to abide by the rules like anybody else— (*The main door opens and ROLAND CARRISTER storms in.*)

CARRISTER

Forgive me sir, but this is urgent—

PRESIDENT

Roland, if there's one thing I won't stand for, it's coming in here without my approval—

CARRISTER

You mean, Mr. President, you'll see the likes of Daniel Beaumont and won't grant a minute to a Cabinet officer?

PRESIDENT

Everyone, and that includes members of the Cabinet, must make an appointment.

CARRISTER

Even on a matter of unforeseen urgency—

PRESIDENT

What could that be?

CARRISTER

Your life, sir.

PRESIDENT

What are you talking about?

CARRISTER

Beaumont, Mr. President. I've just received information that he may have designs on your life—

PRESIDENT

Ridiculous! Who gave you such information?

CARRISTER

A trustworthy member of my investigating staff.

PRESIDENT

(*On the box*) Send in the Captain of the security force at once. (to CARRISTER) I don't believe it, but we'll get to the bottom of this right now. (*The CAPTAIN OF THE SECURITY FORCE enters hurriedly.*)

(*On the box*) Send in Mr. Beaumont.

[The President's Office]

CARRISTER

Even if he should prove to be unarmed, that wouldn't clear him. These people will stop at nothing— (*DANIEL BEAUMONT enters.*)

PRESIDENT

Hello, Dan. Don't be alarmed. This is just a routine precaution, but the Captain here will search you. (*The CAPTAIN frisks DAN thoroughly.*)

CARRISTER

Be extremely thorough. It could be well hidden. (*The CAPTAIN frisks him again and produces an envelope containing papers from Dan's breast pocket.*)

Here, let me see those—

DAN

This is for the President—(*The CAPTAIN hands the papers to CARRISTER*)
This is intended only for the President—

CARRISTER

I bet. (*Glancing through the papers and reading half-loud*) Proposal to guarantee freedom of expression—repeal of restrictive laws—proposal for a Constitutional amendment—

PRESIDENT

Alright, that's enough. Return those papers to Mr. Beaumont.

CARRISTER

As you wish, Mr. President. (*He returns the envelope to DAN.*) Well, Mr. Beaumont, we meet at last. Although I hardly expected it to be here.
(*DAN looks at him contemptuously.*)

PRESIDENT

Are you satisfied that he is unarmed?

CARRISTER

Yes, sir. But guns are not the only objects that can harm you. But if you're satisfied, I have no reason not to be. (*To DAN*) I hope you will excuse this inconvenience, but it was necessary. One can never be too careful where the President's security is concerned. (*To the PRESIDENT*) Forgive this interruption, Mr. President. (*He goes to the door, then turns around.*) Oh yes, in the event of a strike tomorrow, you can rest assured, sir, that the Federal police are fully prepared to safeguard all Government buildings and installations.
(*He goes out.*)

PRESIDENT

Captain, I want you to change the guards outside this door (*pointing to the main door*). And I want you to instruct all your men that nobody is ever to enter here again without go-ahead from the reception desk. Is that absolutely clear? There are to be no exceptions.

[Scene Eight]

CAPTAIN

Yes, sir. Not even the Attorney General?

PRESIDENT

Especially not the Attorney General.

CAPTAIN

Yes, sir, Mr. President. (*He goes out quickly.*)

PRESIDENT

Well, Dan, it would appear you've got a rather powerful enemy in the person of the Attorney General.

DAN

I think, Mr. President, we all have a powerful enemy in him. But what's really frightening, sir, is that there seem to be so many who want him in this office. Are they blind? Can't they see the danger? I don't understand what's happened to us.

PRESIDENT

(*pensively*) Lotus eaters don't make good fighters. And liberty requires strong defenders. A generation bent on escaping the harsh facts of reality through every means imaginable tends to take the path of least resistance. That's what happened to us.— Sit down, Dan. (*DAN sits down.*) That and fear. Fear that we're running out of space in this crowded world—that we're running out of resources. Fear that our enemies will attack us. They have fewer resources and far more people. Yes, the fear of war is very real. Even a young man like you will remember that there was a time, not so long ago, when there were no nuclear bombs orbiting the earth. And when you looked up into the sky, you saw a glimpse of the infinite without having to think of the devastating power mankind has placed there. But now we've got to think of it, and we wonder how much more time we have left. And we fear for our survival, as we should.

DAN

And that's where Mr. Carrister comes in.

PRESIDENT

Remember, in other countries, the ruthless—the strong men—have taken over long ago. Despite everything, we've managed to preserve more freedom than most.

DAN

Leave it to Mr. Carrister to close that gap. Fast.

PRESIDENT

There is a need for men like him. We've created it ourselves. The mistrust, the hostility of people toward one another—the slight advantage each is seeking for himself—a certain hopelessness with which we face the future—all this is producing new dangers, new crimes, jeopardizing the very structure of society.

[The President's Office]

And we must protect ourselves against these threats. And Carrister is the right man for that.

DAN

Isn't he exploiting this sentiment for his own purpose? Isn't he deliberately playing on our fears—yes, even encouraging them—just to get votes?

PRESIDENT

That is his right. The issue is there. He didn't manufacture it. And if the people consider it more important than any other—then he'll win.

DAN

That would be final proof that we've lost our taste for freedom. That we've traded it in for complete Government domination—in the dubious hope for security.

PRESIDENT

Perhaps. But freedom by itself is of no use. You can't exist on it. It serves only as a frame wherein to build a social structure. A young and undeveloped country with few people and enormous unexplored resources could offer virtually unrestricted freedom. But a highly advanced society—probably overdeveloped for our own good—with dwindling resources must allocate, restrict, and control—at the expense of individual liberties.

DAN

Mr. President, with all due respect, I can't agree with this. Freedom is not a privilege that is granted and can be taken away again at the Government's whim—whenever the circumstances may demand it. It is a necessity to an intelligent and creative society. It is the most important thing in the world. Whatever changes progress may force on us, will have to be adjusted to this basic concept. But never must we take away from it just to make room for change. This was the foundation of America. This is what made us different from any other nation. This was our heritage. And every time somebody is tampering with it, they are tampering with our birthright.

PRESIDENT

The Government has a duty to legislate to meet the exigencies of changing times—

DAN

Even if these laws deprive us of our basic right to freedom? (*Brief pause*) Of all the creatures on this earth, only man is not completely free—by his own doing. The kind of social order we have created so laboriously extracted this price from us. But what we've come to call progress in recent times is really no more than a way—a temporary one at that—to accommodate more and more of us, while rendering life itself more meaningless. Life, after all, is an experience of the individual. And yet what value do we place on him? We've lost respect for him. And in a wider sense, we've lost respect for life and for each other. And while man's tolerance of one another has never been his greatest virtue—existing in such huge quantities has brought on a hostility that threatens to destroy us.

[Scene Eight]

Is it surprising that we fear each other nearly as much as we do our enemies? We've turned this glorious earth into an anthill: each ant's assigned a menial function or must perish. But we have missed life's promise—as it was meant for the one creature with the ability to shape his destiny. We've shortchanged nature, and we've cheated ourselves. *(Pause.)* There is at least one question each generation must ask itself anew: Do we live by the grace of God—or by the grace of governments?

PRESIDENT

(after a moment's consideration) Is that what you teach at the university?

DAN

Yes, sir. I believe this question contains the essence of our existence. And the conflict created by the two possible answers— Isn't that the record of all history?
(The PRESIDENT gets up and walks around.)

PRESIDENT

What are these papers you brought me?

DAN (removing them from his breast pocket)

They deal with various ways of reducing the impact of government on the individual citizen. They contain concrete proposals, as you've asked for, sir. I've also included a proposal for a Constitutional amendment that would curb the powers of the President. This is not aimed at you, sir, but at future Presidents who may not be as willing to listen. *(He hands the papers to the President.)*

PRESIDENT (taking them)

Have you an idea what the chances are for a Constitutional amendment now?

DAN

Nil, sir. But does that mean one shouldn't think about it or try and lay the groundwork?

PRESIDENT

What have you got in mind—by curbing Presidential powers?

DAN

When the Constitution was written, the danger then was dissolution of the Union, not tyranny. The total population was less than Detroit's. Who, in their wildest dreams, could have foreseen what we would become? Yet one man continues to be in sole charge. As Commander in Chief, he alone can give the order that might virtually destroy the earth. And he alone is responsible for the conduct of foreign policy that might lead to that. His legislative influence, his power of appointments, are so vast—

PRESIDENT

(gently) I daresay I'm familiar with that—

[The President's Office]

DAN

Sorry, Mr. President. But with all these powers still in the hands of one man—what if they were to fall into the wrong hands? Are you aware, sir, that little Switzerland—I believe it was in the 1860's—when searching for a model of a constitution it could adapt to its own democracy, rejected ours because, in their view, that concentration of authority contained the risk of despotism?

PRESIDENT

Still, we've managed to grow impressively and avoid that, haven't we?

DAN

Mainly, because most Presidents appealed to the people's spirit of independence. But is this still true today, with the Government in complete command of our lives—employing directly and indirectly more than half the population? We're taking chances, sir, with every passing term.

PRESIDENT

A number of studies of this potential problem have been made in the past.

DAN

Yes, and they've been shelved and forgotten. And once the wrong man gets into this office, it'll be too late. I think, my suggestion is a little different, because it proposes to return more elective power to the people. It recommends three Vice Presidents with specific functions, each elected separately—

PRESIDENT

Of the same party?

DAN

Not necessarily.

PRESIDENT

Then you'll have a problem.

DAN

A minor one in comparison to the dangers of possible abuse of power. No more than you, sir, have with Mr. Carrister who wants your office. Which, of course, wasn't possible either until the advent of the national primary.

PRESIDENT

Alright, Dan, I'll look at it. But as you know, most of what you seem to be proposing, is completely out of my hands.

DAN

All I can hope for, Mr. President, is that you'll look at it. In fact, it's a great deal more than I can hope for.

[Scene Eight]

PRESIDENT

It's been a long time since I've met a man so concerned with the rights of his fellow men. Is there a chance you'll change your mind and come to work for me after all?

DAN

What could I do, sir, working for the Government that I couldn't do better through conversations like this? You've granted me a rare privilege, and that's worth far more to me than a job.

PRESIDENT

Don't you want anything for yourself?

DAN

I am content.

PRESIDENT

Have you traveled? Have you been abroad?

DAN

No, sir.

PRESIDENT

Wouldn't you like to go?

DAN

I go out into the country whenever I can afford it. Virginia, Kentucky—it's so peaceful there. And I've been up and down the East Coast. But most of my traveling's done in my mind. It's less trouble and cheaper.

PRESIDENT

Perhaps the most worthwhile experiences take place only in our minds. (*Getting up*) Will you come again and let me share some of your thinking?

DAN

I'd be most proud to, sir. Whenever you say.

PRESIDENT

Good. Well, Dan, goodbye for now.

(*He holds out his hand which DAN grasps warmly.*)

DAN

Goodbye, Mr. President. And thank you very much.

PRESIDENT

I thank you, Dan. Very much.

(*DAN goes out quickly. The PRESIDENT goes slowly back to his desk, sits down, opens a drawer and takes a large folder from it. He ponders for one long moment, writes briefly, then presses a button. HELEN FERGUSON enters promptly.*)

[The President's Office]

HELEN

Yes, sir?

PRESIDENT

I have just vetoed the Public Dissent bill. Will you see to it that it goes back to the Hill promptly?

HELEN

I certainly will, sir. *(Then with emotion.)* Thank you, Mr. President. This may be one of the great moments in our history.

PRESIDENT

Only time will tell.— There'll be no need for any special announcement. Please tell Jack Fredericks to inform the press routinely at the evening briefing.

(HELEN FERGUSON goes out quickly.)

BLACKOUT.

SCENE NINE: THE APARTMENT OF DANIEL BEAUMONT.

About 7 p.m. of the same day. DAN enters carrying a wrapped bottle.

DAN

Hey, Stella. Stella! (*STELLA CONNERY enters from the kitchenette.*) Did you hear the news? He did it. He really did it? Maybe there's still a little hope left after all. What do you think? (*He kisses her.*) What is it, baby?

STELLA

Nothing.

DAN

Come on Stella. Out with it.

STELLA

It's really nothing. Yes, I've heard the news. It's great.

DAN

Is it? I've seen you more excited when eggs are ten cents off on a special. Did you hear me? The President vetoed the Public Dissent bill. And there aren't enough votes in the Senate to override the veto. That's what we've been working for. Remember? I bought a bottle of booze to celebrate. The best. Here. (*He hands her the bottle.*)

STELLA

I'm glad, Dan. You've probably done more than anybody to make this happen. But it's also a victory for Carrister, don't forget that. He's got his issue now. And that gives him a real chance. (*She unwraps the bottle and puts it on the table.*)

DAN

We're not going to let that happen, are we?

STELLA

What can we do?

DAN

Work for the President. I mean, really go out and work for him.

STELLA

A lot of good that'll do! Most people've got their minds all made up, you know that. What makes you think you can change a single vote?

DAN

How do you like that! You don't think I've got any power of persuasion?

STELLA

I didn't mean it that way. People have a closed mind. Complete apathy to everything except what affects them directly.

[The Apartment of Daniel Beaumont]

DAN

And you don't think the outcome of a Presidential election does?

STELLA

Dan, the publicity you got defeats your purpose. People have you typed. They know what you stand for. Those who agree with you don't need your arguments. And those who don't won't listen to them.

DAN

Thanks a lot.

STELLA

Be realistic, Dan. I don't know why Anderson did this. All I know is that he handed Carrister an awful lot of votes. Is that your power of persuasion?

DAN

I want you to know something. This damned bill didn't even come up once in our conversation. The President didn't mention it, and I didn't.

STELLA

How can you be so naive, Dan? You don't have to talk about it. You breathe it—you live it! And maybe Anderson is a bit of a sentimentalist. There's your answer.

DAN

You don't believe that for a moment. He knows what he's doing. And he does only what he thinks is right. Regardless of the consequences.

STELLA

No politician ever does that.

DAN

Then I'll tell you why he did it. Because he's so damned fed up with this whole state of affairs, he figures it doesn't make one bit of difference anyway, whether or not he surrenders his scruples to the voters. So, he might as well indulge in that bit of luxury and hold on to his principles. That's what he thinks how far gone we are!

STELLA

And so the country will go Carrister all the way.

DAN

Don't mention that bastard's name any more. I've had it with him. Do you know he accused me of trying to harm the President? He had me frisked right in the President's office.

STELLA

You met Carrister?

[Scene Nine]

DAN

Let's say I saw him. I'm still trying to get the bad taste out of my mouth. But the President sure put him in his place. He almost threw him out.

STELLA

Oh, my God—

DAN

What is it? What's with you, Stella?

STELLA

Let's get away from here. Let's get out of all this. Let's leave here. Right away.

DAN

What on earth are you talking about?

STELLA

Are you blind? Can't you see Carrister is out to get you?

DAN

I know he's trying. But what can he get me for?

STELLA (*building up to an emotional climax*)

For being what you are. For saying what he wants nobody to hear. That we're on the wrong track. That this kind of life is no longer fit to live. That we've ruined everything we once held sacred. That we've become a bunch of cancer cells feeding on each other—with no other instinct than to prolong this miserable existence a little longer. That we can survive! Because, don't you see, survival is everything.

DAN

Stella! Take it easy.

STELLA

No, we mustn't be allowed to disagree with the almighty Government. How dare we take issue with established views—object to the decisions that were so wisely made for the great benefit of all us nobodies! All we're still free to do is to agree, applaud, cheer—rejoice when they throw up a thousand bombs into the sky and shout for more. Of course, dissent must go! Dissent is dangerous—it undermines the strength of our actions. We've got to be united—one mind, one purpose. Survival!

DAN (*taking her by the shoulders*)

Stella, that's enough!

STELLA (*freeing herself*)

You've been had! He's used you. He's accomplished what he wanted. Can't you see that? And I've been his tool. I've helped him.

DAN

You don't make sense.

[The Apartment of Daniel Beaumont]

STELLA

Don't I? When is it going to dawn on you that Carrister had you set up from the start to bring about just that? And now he's got what he so badly wanted. He's got his issue—thanks to you. And thanks to me for helping him.

DAN

What are you talking about?

STELLA

I've helped him. I've worked for his department for over three years. I'm what is called a trusted agent. A valuable employee. A big fat louse, that's what I am.

DAN

You? *(Pause)* A fake? A goddamn fake? All of it?

STELLA

(more quietly) No, Dan. Not all of it. Not my love. *(He walks away from her and stands with his back toward her.)* Say something, Dan. Please. Insult me, hurt me, beat me. Do something.

DAN

(after a brief pause, quietly) If that would help, I probably would. But nothing quite so simple helps.— Did you have fun—while it lasted?

STELLA

Don't talk like that. I haven't sold you out. You've got to believe that. I refused to cooperate. I told them I was through.

DAN

(sarcastically) Marvelous!

STELLA

You don't understand. You don't know what that means. You don't have any idea of the consequences.

DAN

I couldn't care less.

STELLA

You've got to care. It effects you as much as me. Dan, you've got to believe me. Dan, do you hear me? I love you, Dan. More than I ever thought I could love. You've got to trust me.

DAN

So you can make a sucker out of me for your next assignment? Tell me, what do you get out of this? Money? Kicks? What?

STELLA

It started out just as a job. Just like any other job.

[Scene Nine]

DAN

Just like any other job as spy, informer, stoolie—that's what you mean to say, isn't it? And you've done well, haven't you? You've got your reward. And now, I suppose, you want to live happily ever after.

STELLA

I got no reward. I haven't finished my assignment. I haven't kept my commitment. I'm out. Out in a bad way. Don't you see, Dan, I didn't have to tell you all this. But I have. Doesn't that prove something to you?

DAN

Yeah. That you're a lousy spy.

STELLA

I guess, I am. And because of it, we're both in danger now. They wanted me to photograph everything you wrote. Most of all, they wanted copies of your proposals to the President.

DAN

Did you oblige?

STELLA

No, Dan. I gave them copies of your first draft. That's when I told them there wouldn't be any more—that I want out.

DAN

So that's why Carrister staged that little scene of having me searched.

STELLA

Right. You see, your ideas, your suggestions were to be used to discredit the President. It's all part of Carrister's scheme to get into the White House.

DAN

Incredible!

STELLA

What makes it even worse—they'll undoubtedly assume I've told you. And that's why your safety is also in jeopardy.

DAN

My safety's been in jeopardy from the day I was born. Like everybody's.

STELLA

No, Dan. Not like this. He's a powerful enemy. That's why we've got to get away from here.

DAN

Where to? Such a powerful enemy would find me anywhere, wouldn't he? (*She doesn't respond immediately.*) Well, wouldn't he?

[The Apartment of Daniel Beaumont]

STELLA

At least we'll gain time. And maybe there's still a chance he'll be defeated in the primaries—*(She sighs deeply)* Oh, I don't know any more— I've done this to you. Can you believe it? I can't!

DAN

Can't you? Didn't you realize what you were doing? Didn't you ever think what might happen? That it might come to—a moment like this?

STELLA

I've thought of nothing else—when it was too late! *(More quietly)* I don't care how silly it sounds. You're all that matters to me. Everything else is meaningless. But how could I have known this 'till I've come to know you? And from that moment on, my fear of losing you— *(She suppresses a sob.)* Tell me, Dan, that I haven't lost you—

DAN

My God, Stella, what do you expect? I'm made of flesh and blood, too— *(He walks around the room)* Of all people—the one person—the only one! And you'd have to do a goddamn thing like this! *(Brief pause)* I should have known something was wrong. These last few days—you didn't seem yourself. But so much happened. And I was so absorbed by it all— *(He stops walking and faces her)* I don't know, Stella. This is a different ball game. I've got to think about it—

STELLA

Yes, Dan, I thought you would. But remember just one thing: before it began, you were just an assignment for me. And—when it happened to us—I chucked it. And I'm paying for it—

DAN

The fact remains—you chose a job—out of your own free will—that gives you the power to destroy human beings who've done nothing worse than to express an opinion different from your boss'—

STELLA

I had no idea of what I was getting into when I took this job—

DAN

You should have! What did you think it was all about? Oh, I suppose, it was quite an accomplishment to get a job like this. There must be thousands wanting it. They no doubt think it's just great to do something like this—

STELLA

Dan, stop it, please—

DAN

Sure, that's easy! But how do you stop thinking about it? How do you adjust to it? *(Somewhat softer)* I've got to be alone. I'm going for a walk. It's going to be a long one—

[Scene Nine]

STELLA

No, Dan. You stay. This is your home. I'm going to leave. *(She is hoping for DAN to object, but when he does not, she takes her jacket from the closet and puts it over her shoulders. Then she picks up her purse and faces DAN.)*

All I'm asking, Dan, is that you'll understand. I'm not perfect. But, God knows, neither is this world. But it's the only one we've got, and we're all a part of it. *(She swallows hard.)* If you want me, you know where to reach me. I'll be waiting.

(STELLA goes out quickly and closes the door behind her. DAN stands motionless for a few seconds, then slowly goes to the kitchenette to get a glass. He looks for the bottle of whiskey he brought, then sees it on the table. He pours himself a stiff drink, holds it up and looks at it for a moment, but puts it down again. Then he rushes to the door and opens it quickly.)

DAN *(at the door)*

Stella! *(He goes out into the corridor)* Hey, Stella!

(He shuts the door from the outside.)

BLACKOUT.

SCENE TEN: A SITTING ROOM IN THE WHITE HOUSE.

It is 9 p.m. The room is dimly lit. The PRESIDENT, seated on the sofa, is alternately reading some papers and putting them down, staring before him, as KEVIN RAMSEY enters.

RAMSEY

May I come in?

PRESIDENT

Of course, Kevin. Sit down. (*RAMSEY sits in a lounge chair.*) How are things going at the State Department?

RAMSEY

Hectic. News is coming in fast and furious. I've just talked with Fitzgerald in Zubaran. He's toured the coast by motorlaunch and saw five more freighters about two miles offshore waiting for dockspace. That's in addition to the four now unloading. There's no question: those vessels carry all the equipment for a tracking station as complex as the one they've got in the Arctic. As everything is modularized, it'll be just a matter of a few days before their station will be operational.

PRESIDENT

I know. Admiral Kearney just left here. He expects it to work within 72 hours. That doesn't give us enough time to improvise, much less to set up a floating station. But what concerns me much more—they're putting their ocean platform in place on the 88th meridian, 420 miles south of Mobile. It also happens to be the one crossing Chicago—

RAMSEY (Jumping up)

Goddamn it—if that isn't the limit! They've got to be out of their minds. The trouble is that—under international law—that sort of thing isn't even illegal—

PRESIDENT

At this point, we're not going to be too much concerned with international law—

RAMSEY

Then I'm inclined to agree that what Zellerbach proposes is the right course. Yet there remains this tiny speck of doubt: what if we have put too much weight on one factor and not enough on another. What, if our intelligence reports reflect just the slightest bias—and when compounded add up to a miscalculation. This is what haunts me.

PRESIDENT

There's always that possibility, but only to a minimal degree. The greatest risk, as I see it, is the other side's ability to interpret our actions properly: that we have drawn the line here and now—that we're not going to tolerate any more! But that this is no belligerence on our part, but a warning—a warning to go no further! What adds to the danger—as of this moment, our overall strategic

[Scene Ten]

capabilities appear to be just about equal. In General Zellerbach's words, "the pendulum is at dead center." But it goes on swinging, and nobody wants to be the weaker side. This is the crucial moment.

RAMSEY

For the sake of leaving no approach untried, would a direct call to their Chairman be of any use in making our position clear?

PRESIDENT

The hot line hasn't been used in years. Not since that unfortunate experience during the Kinsan Bay crisis which resulted in the break of diplomatic relations. Since that time, it's become something like the old chicken game. Whoever uses it first is the loser and will have to accept the terms of the other side. Needless to say, I'm not even going to consider it.

RAMSEY

We've got to realize they've come up from behind. And that, no doubt, gives them a feeling of overconfidence. Their simultaneous provocations in four separate areas are clear evidence of that. Our response began only two days ago, although it seems like a different age.

PRESIDENT

Correction. We began to react six days ago. But that reaction was still on a diplomatic level and was ignored.

RAMSEY

Yes, that is important. And only then did we respond militarily, and only where we had been challenged. In Zubaran, in the Gulf, and in the Arctic. But not in space.

PRESIDENT

That was the unanimous advice of the military. And yours as well.

RAMSEY

Right. That was the only course of action. Like chasing a prowler out of your own backyard. But how did they accept this? With a move more threatening than all their others combined. A missile attack against our reconnaissance aircraft over the Arctic—neutral territory! That happened (*looking at his watch*) just six and a half hours ago. The customary protest via Switzerland was summarily rejected with a reaction time of less than an hour.

PRESIDENT

Making it unmistakably clear that their course had been set with deliberation.

RAMSEY

Unfortunately—and I've got to say this, Burke—your veto may have encouraged them. Coming at this time—and creating the uproar it has—it must have seemed the perfect moment for them to exploit.

PRESIDENT

[A Sitting Room in the White House]

This may be true. (*with anger*) But they'll be dangerously mistaken, if they interpret my desire to preserve our time-honored values as an invitation to tread on us! And if they expect me to act like—what they think might be a lame duck—they could be in for a surprise!

RAMSEY

There're just two possible choices open to us: reaction in kind or escalation. If we react in kind now—and there is no further response—a big if—we'd be even, at least theoretically. But if they continue to escalate, and we continue to respond in kind—they'll be able to predict the exact degree of our retaliation. If, on the other hand, we'd escalate our reaction, we'd be one step ahead—and gain the initiative.

PRESIDENT

While giving them clear warning of our determination. Which seems to be especially important at this moment.

RAMSEY

Then this is the preferred choice. But it is also far more risky. (*ROSANNE enters hurriedly.*)

ROSANNE

Excuse me, gentlemen. Burke, Nelson Young is here. He'd like to see you for a moment—

PRESIDENT

Alright—have him come in. (*ROSANNE motions at the door for NELSON YOUNG to come in, then leaves.*)

NELSON

Excuse this late intrusion, Mr. President, but I thought you'd want to know this right away. I've just learned that Dan Beaumont has been killed—

PRESIDENT

What?

NELSON

He was shot on campus by Federal officers—allegedly for resisting arrest.

PRESIDENT

Arrest for what?

NELSON

I don't know that, sir.

PRESIDENT

Get hold of Carrister. I want him here as quickly as possible.

NELSON

Yes, Mr. President. (*He goes out quickly.*)

[Scene Ten]

PRESIDENT

No. it can't be—(*turning away*) This is too much—

RAMSEY

(*after a short pause*) Isn't he the young professor who was arrested when—

PRESIDENT

Yes. Yes. A fine fellow—and I've done nothing to protect him. But what would he let me do for him? (*turning to Ramsey*) He was that rarest of men—who wanted nothing for himself. A dying breed— But, I'm afraid we've got no time for mourning. Our business is deadly serious. Where were we? Oh, yes, we were discussing our response. You were saying, of the two choices open to us—the preferred is obviously escalation—

RAMSEY

It is also the far more dangerous one—

PRESIDENT

There's still another factor. We cannot respond exactly in kind. There is no exact parallel situation. They've got no aircraft flying over similarly strategic neutral areas that we can blow out of the sky. So, in any event, our response would have to be either a little more or a little less. A lesser move would be a sign of timidity and certainly would invite others—

RAMSEY

Which really ought to make our choice clear—

PRESIDENT

Ought to, Kevin? You're still hesitating? (*Pacing back and forth.*) I've gone through similar exercises before, though the situation wasn't as acutely critical as this. And I hesitated. And many have inferred, if not accused me outright, that I was weak, that I was unwilling or unable to accept the challenge of our time. Maybe you were among them, Kevin. But now it counts. We're at a crucial point. God knows we've prepared long enough for it.

RAMSEY

But we've prepared for the sole purpose of avoiding it!

PRESIDENT

I've never accepted the ancient doctrine that, if you want peace, you must prepare for war. It may perhaps be a general's dictum. It can never be a statesman's. New weapons create new challenges, new counterweapons. If you want peace, you work to eliminate the basic conditions leading to conflict. Break down the barriers of communications separating us. Yes, we had to do that first. But how? How can one man, or a handful of men, even with the best of intentions, bring about something that is contrary to everything entrenched in our thinking for so long? And now it is too late to even try. We've run out of time. Kevin, if your counsel is going to help me, I need it now. Is Zellerbach's proposal, in your view, too much of an escalation?

[A Sitting Room in the White House]

RAMSEY

To knock one of their satellites out of orbit and into space?— I'm afraid it may be. It could be misunderstood as a prelude to an all-out release of ours. I think it would be wiser to limit our response to, shall we say, sinking one of their subs—

PRESIDENT

But their threats everywhere are aimed directly at our primary systems: the satellites. That's what this whole game is about. And submarines play only an indirect role. This would be plainly de-escalation—for all the world to see. The weaker of the two choices. It would encourage them to make new moves. Which is exactly what we want to avoid.

RAMSEY

There must be a less belligerent response. One that clearly demonstrates our determination but cannot be interpreted as an irrevocable commitment to go all out. After all, we've got to consider what is at stake—

PRESIDENT

By God, I am considering it! When we started to debate this whole issue of the nuclear satellite system seven or eight years ago, the military, business—and you among them—a majority in the Congress—all were strongly for it. They were clamoring for it. We've spent untold billions for it. So have our enemies. Why? Hasn't it occurred to anybody we might use it some day—and what the consequences would be? If you'll recall—and it doesn't matter one red cent now—I was against it. Damn it, we're not playing with marbles.

RAMSEY

Zellerbach's proposal is based on the assumption that our capability of knocking out their satellites is superior to their's. What if that assumption is not correct?

PRESIDENT

Do you realize what is involved is something like hitting a volleyball more than a hundred miles out in space, and moving at five miles a second? It they had anything like it, you can be sure they'd have ventured even greater provocations than they have.

RAMSEY

But what if our assessment of their capability is at least partly incorrect?

PRESIDENT

Then there's the remote possibility they might conceivably knock out one of ours. And we'd end up even.

RAMSEY

And there's no chance of their interfering with ours electronically?

PRESIDENT

Not one in ten million. That was the system's chief selling point. (*NELSON YOUNG enters.*)

[Scene Ten]

NELSON

Sir, the Attorney General is here.

PRESIDENT

Show him in, please. (*NELSON YOUNG goes out.*)

RAMSEY

I'd better leave you alone. (*The PRESIDENT nods and RAMSEY goes out. A second later, ROLAND CARRISTER enters.*)

CARRISTER

Mr. President.

PRESIDENT (*stands with his back toward Carrister*)

I've just been told of the death at Daniel Beaumont. What do you know about it?

CARRISTER

(*casually*) I myself learned about it less than half an hour ago. From what I've been told, it was a case of resisting arrest, aggravated by assault and battery. Beaumont not only attempted to break away from the arresting officers, but he jumped one of them, inflicting physical harm. The other, evidently in an effort to restrain him, pulled his gun. But Beaumont tried to take it away from him and in the ensuing struggle was shot.

PRESIDENT

For what reason was he arrested?

CARRISTER

A conspiracy charge. Conspiracy against the life and safety of a Government official, a felony under section C-895 of the—

PRESIDENT

Who's the Government official?

CARRISTER

I, sir.

PRESIDENT

(*after a second's pause, continuing calmly*) I suppose you can support this charge in court with proper evidence?

CARRISTER

I have unimpeachable witnesses. I'd never proceed on a case of such potential magnitude without the strongest possible evidence. You know me, sir.

PRESIDENT

Yes, I am beginning to. But it's too late now. We can't bring him back. All we can try to do is to avenge this—wanton murder.

[A Sitting Room in the White House]

CARRISTER

Murder, sir? This man was trying to escape the lawful custody—

PRESIDENT

Enough of that! You've used that boy for your insidious scheme. And after you were through with him, you had him killed!

CARRISTER

This is a very serious accusation. I trust you're prepared to substantiate it.

PRESIDENT

I am indeed. I'm going to appoint a panel to investigate every aspect of this entire affair.

CARRISTER

You'll find me and my department most cooperative. But I am sorry, sir, that this issue of public dissent has divided us so deeply that communication between us is hardly possible any more. That you, Mr. President, have become so insensitive to the needs and demands of the people. If democracy is to have any chance at all in the future, then the overwhelming majority must assert itself overwhelmingly. Of course, it can still be generous with those who disagree, but—like all generosity—its extent must depend entirely on how much the donor can afford.

PRESIDENT

This will be the fastest way to end democracy. If we reduced the rights of citizens who differ with the majority to nothing more than alms, we would deny the possibility of change—we'd nullify everything mankind has struggled for from the beginning. We'd be back on the way to the Stone Age.

CARRISTER

When the choice is between survival and what we call freedom, then there's really no choice at all. Freedom is an illusion, a dangerous illusion, because it lulls us into a state of self-admiration, making us shut our eyes to the perils surrounding us. This crisis threatening our very existence today is the direct result of the permissiveness we've tolerated far too long under the name of freedom.

PRESIDENT

Quite the contrary. This crisis began long ago. When we lost sight of our own ideals. When we became so preoccupied with our material accomplishments, we ceased to inspire the world with our humanity. When we were unwilling to grant a forum to divergent thinking. When we stifled the voice of dissent! For then we emulated the system of our foes!

CARRISTER

Public dissent! That's what it all boils down to in your view, Mr. President, doesn't it? Well, permit me to tell you one thing about dissent, sir. The great majority of the people don't give a hoot for it! They eat, they drink, they copulate—and that is all they care about. And in the process they multiply themselves, as if to perpetuate their greedy little egos for all eternity. And as long as we see

[Scene Ten]

to it that they have their bellies full and a bed to sleep in—they couldn't care less about dissent! You're protecting a phantom, sir. There's only one thing that matters today, Mr. President, and that's survival!

PRESIDENT

I shudder at this nightmare of a world you're describing. How can a man in my Administration have such a pitiful opinion of his fellow men? How can you possibly protect the rights of decent citizens when obviously you feel nothing but contempt for them? When you condone—no, when you direct the murder of the best among us!

CARRISTER

(icily) Mr. President, I've been aware that you liked this man. But I had no idea to what extent.

PRESIDENT

(after a brief pause during which he struggles to keep his control) There is no room in my Administration for a man like you. I want your resignation. There's paper on the desk.

CARRISTER

I've got no intention of resigning.

PRESIDENT

Then I'll dismiss you.

CARRISTER

You wouldn't dare. You know very well, the vast majority of the voters would support me!

PRESIDENT

God help us if this were true. But it won't alter my decision.

CARRISTER

Whenever we're faced with a lost cause, we're trying to bring God into the picture. Why should He help you?

PRESIDENT

I've got nothing further to say to you. *(He pushes a button.)*

CARRISTER

Go ahead. Call in your dogs. I'm immune to their bite.

(NELSON YOUNG enters quickly.)

PRESIDENT

I've seen fit to dismiss this man from office. Sheridan will become Acting Attorney General effective immediately. Get in touch with him at once. And inform him also that Mr. Carrister shall not be admitted to the Justice Department, pending a complete investigation of the Beaumont affair.

[A Sitting Room in the White House]

NELSON

Yes, Mr. President. *(Two GUARDS enter hurriedly.)*

PRESIDENT *(to the Guards)*

Escort this man out and see to it that he gets home. Under no circumstances is he to enter the Justice Department. Understood?

(The GUARDS nod and take CARRISTER by the arms.)

CARRISTER

Don't you dare touch me! *(turning around to the President)* You'll have hell to answer for this, *(with deep sarcasm)* Mr. President.

(CARRISTER is led out by the GUARDS, followed by NELSON YOUNG. The PRESIDENT sinks into a chair. He takes out a handkerchief and wipes his forehead. Then, looking at his watch, he picks up a phone.)

PRESIDENT

Get me General Zellerbach. *(He is connected.)* Paul? Anything new? I see. Paul, I'm accepting your recommendation. Go ahead with what you proposed this afternoon. Yes. Yes, I know. That is my decision. And let me know at once— Yes, alright. *(He hangs up. A moment later, ROSANNE enters, followed by RAMSEY.)*

ROSANNE

What on earth was all that about? *(looking at the PRESIDENT)* My God, Burke, what happened? You look as if the world is coming to an end.

PRESIDENT

(trying to control his inner turmoil) Perhaps it is.

BLACKOUT.

SCENE ELEVEN: THE PRESIDENT'S OFFICE.

It is 6 p.m. of the following afternoon. The PRESIDENT is at his desk with NELSON YOUNG standing by him. HELEN FERGUSON is standing near the window.

NELSON

By any standard, sir, the reaction to your address is simply remarkable. There is an almost serene kind of calm. The media report only a scattering of panic in a few of the big cities.

PRESIDENT

Obviously in sharp contrast to the happenings on Capitol Hill. But even there I've seen worse on far less solemn occasions. Carrister's inglorious departure would have been reason enough for a ruckus in normal times.

HELEN

The streets are deserted. I've never seen it so quiet.

PRESIDENT

Let's hope you won't again—ever.

HELEN

Things will be back to normal again in a few hours when the crisis stage's passed. *(Turning around to the President, as if seeking confirmation)* Right, Mr. President?

PRESIDENT

One way or another, yes.

NELSON

Is there anything else we can do, sir?

PRESIDENT

No, I believe we've taken care of everything for the time being. But you'd better wait around 'till the Swiss Ambassador has left. It won't take a few minutes.

HELEN

He should be here any second. I'd better go. *(She goes out.)*

NELSON

I think I'd better leave, too, sir, if there's nothing else right now.
(He goes toward the door.)

PRESIDENT

One moment, Nelson. *(NELSON turns around. The PRESIDENT hesitates briefly.)* ■
I want you to know how deeply I appreciate everything you've done. Your devotion and loyalty have been—
(He clears his throat but cannot continue.)

[The President's Office]

NELSON

But Mr. President, that sounds like a sort of goodbye—

PRESIDENT

It isn't meant to be. It just seems to me that, once in a great while, one should be free to say what one feels. And as far as I'm concerned, you deserve every kind of praise possible—

NELSON

Well—I don't really know what to say, sir. *(He turns away.)* I'm afraid now you've got me all shook up. *(collecting himself.)* But don't worry, Mr. President, there'll be happier times again—

(The buzzer sounds on the President's desk.)

PRESIDENT *(answering it)*

Yes?

HELEN'S VOICE

Secretary MacDonald and the Ambassador from Switzerland are here.

PRESIDENT

Ask them to come in, please.

(Enter CARTER MACDONALD with Dr. WALTER KRAUSS, the AMBASSADOR from SWITZERLAND. NELSON YOUNG goes out.)

MACDONALD

Mr. President, His Excellency, Dr. Krauss, the Ambassador from Switzerland.

(The PRESIDENT goes toward Dr. KRAUSS and shakes hands with him.)

PRESIDENT

Mr. Ambassador, I wish I could greet you under more auspicious circumstances—

AMBASSADOR

Thank you, Excellency, for seeing me so promptly. If the moment weren't so crucial, I wouldn't have imposed on your Excellency at such short notice. But because it is, and because of the most delicate subject matter, I have one further request: with all due respect to the able Acting Secretary, I would like to speak to your Excellency alone—

(MACDONALD exchanges glances with the PRESIDENT, deferring the decision to him.)

PRESIDENT

This is highly irregular, but so is the situation. Alright, Carter, may I suggest you return to the State Department. I'll see to it that the Ambassador gets back safely. I'll be in touch with you shortly.

MACDONALD

Very well, Mr. President. *(He bows curtly to the AMBASSADOR, then goes out.)*

[Scene Eleven]

PRESIDENT

Now then, Mr. Ambassador, what is the urgent message from your Government?

AMBASSADOR

It is this, Excellency. Events of the past few days have made it abundantly clear that the two major powers appear to be headed for a direct and inextricable collision which may have the most disastrous consequences for all mankind. Therefore, it is my Government's plea that an immediate freeze be put on all military operations by both sides. A similar request to this effect has been made to the other side. In addition, my Government has authorized me to offer suitable sites in Geneva, Lugano, or Bern for a meeting between your Excellency and the head of government of the other side. My Government is prepared to act as intermediary in making the necessary arrangements and schedules. In its view, such arrangements should be begun at once. In fact, the Foreign Ministry is standing by to await your decision, as well as that of the other side, because it believes that at no time in recorded history has mankind faced a peril as grave as at this very moment. That is my message, Excellency.

PRESIDENT

It is very generous of your Government to make this offer. However, although I appreciate the urgency of your message, why couldn't it have been delivered in the presence of Secretary MacDonald?

AMBASSADOR

I'll attempt to answer this shortly, Excellency. The peace of the world has hung in a precarious balance for a long time. Fortunately, your policy, sir, has been characterized by restraint, instead of reacting to every prodding action, so typical of the other side, you have proceeded on your own course with equanimity. But—this has voided the other side's ability to pinpoint the exact line where they will encounter resistance. Lacking this information, they have proceeded with their prodding tactics until they have evidently exceeded the limits of prudence. They have prodded the sleeping bear until their lances have pierced his skin. At this point, he is about to react with his full fury.

(He pauses briefly to observe the President's reaction, but he expects him to go on.)

This is when your Government embarked on an abrupt change of course. In Zubaran, in the Gulf of Mexico, over the Arctic—you responded with sudden vehemence. And by far your most dangerous action came twenty hours ago, when you succeeded in blasting one of their satellites out of orbit, thereby confirming the enormous vulnerability of their system. This can lead only to one of two things: either a race of unprecedented proportions for a new strategic system—with its disastrous drain on both your resources. Or an immediate all-out conflict.

PRESIDENT

Are you aware of their latest reaction?

[The President's Office]

AMBASSADOR

Yes, Excellency. They've retaliated in kind. But the significance is not that they've knocked out one of yours, but that they hesitated sixteen hours before doing it. This clearly indicates a lack of unanimity within their government. Of course, while their timing was calculated to take advantage of political uncertainties here with all its weakening divisiveness,—they've evidently misjudged your determination.

PRESIDENT

What, in your opinion, will happen next?

AMBASSADOR

Well, as of this moment, you've both demonstrated that your capabilities are equal. And equally vulnerable. Unless there's a substantial change in this situation, I'd venture to say—they might welcome a pause.

PRESIDENT

Then let them ask for it. They've got to stop the provocations they began. And only then can we respond. And talk.

AMBASSADOR

Am I to interpret this to mean that you, Excellency, are leaving the next move to the other side?

PRESIDENT

No, sir. They had the last move. And as a result, our country is on general alert. The next move is up to us. And obviously, it cannot be a plea for peace. That would be tantamount to surrender. Our choice is limited. So far, we have reacted only to their provocations. But not yet to their latest one. If they want us to withhold action, then they must ask for it. We will consider that.

AMBASSADOR

I understand, sir. But you've asked me a question. And I have yet to answer it. The past decade has shown that my country's traditional neutrality is no longer sufficient as a national policy in a world where the two predominant powers aren't even on speaking terms. If they choose to blow themselves off the face of the earth, there can be no innocent bystanders. My Government, in a move toward preserving at least a limited choice in the conduct of its own affairs, has specialized in the analysis of political reaction. We scrutinize every action, every move by the major powers for the purpose of arriving at a predictable reaction by the other.

PRESIDENT

And you, Mr. Ambassador, are no doubt an expert at this.

AMBASSADOR

We have to create expertise as we go along. We place in each major country what we consider competent envoys—who're able to dissect policy decisions.

[Scene Eleven]

And who're able to analyze the personalities of the men who make them. This is most important.

PRESIDENT

Are you a scientist, Dr. Krauss?

AMBASSADOR

Not exactly. I'm a physician. A psychiatrist, to be specific.— But, Excellency, the actions by the other side are being put to the closest possible scrutiny. As you know, sir, our embassy there is virtually the only point of contact, since they have cut themselves off completely from the rest of the world. Hence, we consider it the most important. I've talked with our ambassador there by way of our Foreign Ministry just minutes before I came here. You see, Mr. President, what probably no one in the Western world is aware of is that—they are in the throes of catastrophic difficulties. For ten years now, they've tried to compete militarily with the West. Proportionately, they had to apply a far greater segment of their productivity to this effort than you. As a result, their standard of living has deteriorated to the point of famine. Unrest is widespread, and dissent with Government policies is becoming more and more difficult to contain. Not surprisingly, a fierce struggle for control of government is raging right within their innermost circle of power.

PRESIDENT

This could help to explain why they've embarked on their dangerous course of terrorism.

AMBASSADOR

Yes, sir. And it is also the reason why they will not—why they cannot—take the first step in accepting my Government's offer, although one faction of the contestants may be so inclined. But I have been assured by our ambassador, who is a most astute observer, that—should you respond affirmatively, they can be expected to do likewise, as they are most anxious for a pause—

PRESIDENT

A pause? Or a chance for agreement—a chance for peace?

AMBASSADOR

Until they have resolved their internal problem—a pause is evidently all they want and would be prepared to agree to—

PRESIDENT

But if that's all they want, why did they have to make their last move? If they hadn't attacked our satellite—we would have been even.

AMBASSADOR

Perhaps to demonstrate that they, too, had that capability.

PRESIDENT (gets up and paces back and forth)

And now they want a pause! And they want us to ask for it first. So that, in the eyes of their people, they'll emerge as the stronger.— A pause for what?

[The President's Office]

To complete their power struggle? For another round in the weapons race—of unprecedented proportions, as you yourself have said? At the expense of every remaining ounce of humanity? So that their scientists and our scientists can perfect the artificial moon system? A satellite whose orbit can be changed at will—loaded with enough nuclear energy to blow up half a hemisphere at a time? And each side racing the other like mad to have it first? And then what? No, Mr. Ambassador, even in the most frantic arms race, there must be at least one condition tacitly agreed to by both sides. Namely, that they grant each other the necessary time for it. If one side is running out of resources—or if for any other reason it is unwilling to engage in such a contest—then this alternative is out.

AMBASSADOR

Then this is your answer, Excellency? No pause?

PRESIDENT

(somberly) We will not ask for it. That is my answer. A chance for peace, even the remotest—yes. But if they wanted that, they wouldn't have started this whole chain of events. And even if they had afterthoughts now—they could still accept your Government's offer—

AMBASSADOR

If they had—the telephone on your desk, sir, would be ringing now. Yes, Excellency, I see your point.

PRESIDENT

You do? Had you prognosticated this reply?

AMBASSADOR

In fact, I had. And that is why I had to see you privately. So that your response might not be embarrassed or influenced in any way by the presence of another—

PRESIDENT

Why should that be important?

AMBASSADOR

May I be completely frank, Mr. President? *(The PRESIDENT nods.)* I've studied your actions, your policies, your decisions closely. A man like you should be free to act according to his own conscience. Only a man less honorable, less good, requires counsel. Unfortunately, there's just one thing wrong.

PRESIDENT

What's that?

AMBASSADOR

You belong into another time. You were born a hundred, a hundred fifty years too late. You've tried to humanize your Government—tried to free it from the shackles of both excessive computerization and bureaucracy. And you've been trying hard to preserve some of your great traditional values. But you've done

[Scene Eleven]

all this at a time when the largest single segment of your country's productivity is aimed at the destruction of the other half of mankind. And when your people—understandably insecure in their existence—cry out for even greater effort toward that end. Of course, the other side is doing exactly the same thing—at the expense of reducing their mode of living to an unbelievably low level. One is reminded of your famous western movies—where two gunfighters are slowly walking toward each other—their hands poised on their guns in readiness for that split-second advantage. It is difficult to imagine that at a moment like this, their minds are occupied with upgrading human values. Yet, in the real world, this moment has now lasted for several decades.

PRESIDENT

You have a gift for metaphor, Mr. Ambassador.

AMBASSADOR

The irony of the situation is—that were one to ask the people on either side why they're preparing for such a deadly duel—most of them would be hard pressed to state a reason. The divergence of your economic systems? That's largely been voided. You have adopted freely from each other. Yet the hostility remains and is passed on from each generation to the next. And so is the distrust, the suspicions, the accusations, the schemes to gain control over men's minds for the explicit purpose of finding greater strength in numbers. And who cares that in doing so, each man is reduced to the role of a pawn—an infinitesimally small pawn in a gigantic game of chess?

PRESIDENT

Some of us do. Some of us care deeply. And some have given their lives to prevent just that.

AMBASSADOR

Yes, of course. The idealists, the dreamers who still believe in a better destiny for men. But there are very few of them. And they are dying out.

PRESIDENT

You don't hold much hope for mankind, do you, Dr. Krauss?

AMBASSADOR

Look at this game we're playing, Mr. President. The object is survival. The stakes are annihilation. Or is it the other way around? I can't be quite sure. But why do we play this game? It seems to me that those two blocks of power around which the world has been polarized are not unlike an atom in which the positive and negative particles are suspended in perfect balance. But try to upset that harmony, and you'll release the basic force of nature. And ever since man has learned to unleash that power, he's had the deep-seated wish to use it.

PRESIDENT

I'd like to disagree with that. But I can't.

[The President's Office]

AMBASSADOR

Mr. President, it is my view that man, as he is constituted today, is no longer able to co-exist with his fellow men; mainly because we cannot accept any form of thinking or any ideas which are drastically different from our own. We have become our own worst enemy. And in the pursuit of our hostility, we employ the sum total of our intelligence to destroy that part of mankind we can't agree with—even at deadly risk to ourselves. This intolerance is proof that we are not yet capable to comprehend the immensity of our world, and therefore are not fit to rule as the leading species. Destruction is the final step of evolution. This is where it must end before another cycle can begin. Nature is infinitely patient—if it takes another million years to produce a more perfect species—it still isn't even a second in eternity, is it?

PRESIDENT

I don't agree that the end of mankind is near. Even a nuclear holocaust wouldn't destroy our civilization. While much of the population on both sides would perish, enough would survive to start anew. And a decade or two later, mankind will have found itself again—embracing a new set of values. Or perhaps not so new.

AMBASSADOR

A kind of shock treatment to develop a better strain? It will only be a temporary measure. In the end, Man will have to undergo a total metamorphosis to make himself more survivable.

(The buzzer sounds on the President's desk.)

PRESIDENT *(answering hurriedly)*

Yes? Put them on. Oliver? Paul? Yes. Yes. I see. Alright, Oliver, you know what to do. Right. Paul, you come here immediately. Yes. *(looking at his watch)* Right. *(He hangs up and gets up.)*

AMBASSADOR *(also gets up)*

I've taken up too much of your valuable time, Excellency. What reply shall I communicate to my Government?

PRESIDENT

None. I appreciate the offer, but there will be no response. Unless the other side replies first. *(somberly)* And that doesn't seem likely now.— I've promised to see you home safely. Is your family at the embassy?

AMBASSADOR

I've sent my wife and my two sons home this morning. They're safely back in Switzerland. As safe as anyone can be under the circumstances.

PRESIDENT *(on the communications box)*

Nelson, will you please come in? *(to the Ambassador)* I see you have faith in your own analysis.

AMBASSADOR

I do, unfortunately, Excellency. *(NELSON YOUNG enters.)*

[Scene Eleven]

PRESIDENT

This is my assistant, Mr. Young. Nelson, will you please escort the Ambassador to the shelter. This to for your own protection. You will be quite comfortable there. And you will be safe. Thank you for coming. *(Holding out his hand)* Goodbye.

AMBASSADOR

Goodbye, Mr. President. And thank you for this opportunity. *(He goes out.)*

PRESIDENT

You stay in the shelter, Nelson, and wait there for my further instructions. Understood? *(NELSON YOUNG nods, then goes out with some hesitation. The PRESIDENT stands alone at his desk for a moment, then buzzes. HELEN FERGUSON enters quickly.)*

Helen, General Zellerbach will be here momentarily. When he comes, will you please go upstairs to my wife—and bring her down here. And after that, you go into the shelter—and wait there. Is that clear?

HELEN

Yes, Mr. President. *(She is shaken. She wants to say something, but can't find the words. Finally)* That must be the General's helicopter now. Will there be anything else, sir?

PRESIDENT

Not now, thank you. And don't worry, Helen. We've never gone through a crisis yet from which we haven't emerged a better nation. Right?

HELEN

(smiling through tears) Right, Mr. President. *(She goes out, but doesn't close the door, as a moment later GENERAL ZELLERBACH breezes in, carrying a small case.)*

PRESIDENT

Well, Paul, how did everything go?

ZELLERBACH

Quietly, sir. No panic of any kind.

PRESIDENT

Good.

ZELLERBACH

Mr. President, we haven't got final confirmation yet that the last satellite was actually knocked out. It only happened six minutes ago. May I call the situation room?

PRESIDENT

I'll do it for you. *(He pushes a button on the communications box. Instantly, against the sonorous drone of a multitude of voices in the background, there is a "yes, sir" response.)*

[The President's Office]

This is the President. Can you positively confirm knockout of a second satellite?

VOICE ON THE LOUDSPEAKER

Positive. Just confirmed that satellite No. 379 on 37th meridian was knocked out over Arctic. Continuing tracking—current distance from earth about nine thousand miles. Current position—

PRESIDENT

That is sufficient. Thank you.

VOICE

One moment, sir. Is General Zellerbach with you?

PRESIDENT

Yes, he's right here.

ZELLERBACH (into the box)

What is it, Craig?

VOICE

No. 1157 is just disappearing from the scope now.— Can you wait a second?

ZELLERBACH

Alright. *(He looks at the President. For a moment there is absolute silence. Then the drone resumes and, a moment later, the VOICE is back.)*

VOICE

It is a knockout, sir. Satellite is picking up speed—we're tracking it. Azimuth is two zero—

PRESIDENT

That won't be necessary. Thank you. *(He disconnects)* Well, Paul, that's it! Three out of three—in less than four hours. That's quite a feat.

ZELLERBACH

We'll be ready for another one of theirs at 20:15—

PRESIDENT

No, that would be pointless. At that rate, they'll get all of ours before we'll have a third of theirs. Isn't that right?

ZELLERBACH

I'm afraid so, sir.

PRESIDENT (gets up and slowly walks across the room)

Who would have thought that they'd concentrate their technology on trying to outmaneuver us in a squeezeplay—on destroying our weapons one by one. But that strategy is based solely on the assumption that we won't strike first. They are convinced that in the final moment we'd waver—we'd surrender. But they don't know the value of freedom. And so—their tragic mistake is believing that we wouldn't pay the price for it. Some day, this will no doubt be the subject

[Scene Eleven]

of many thoughtful studies on our role in history. But now—it doesn't leave us much of an alternative, does it?

ZELLERBACH

No, sir. We have no choice. We must strike now. Unless—

PRESIDENT

Yes?

ZELLERBACH

Unless there's still some channel of communication left open to you—

PRESIDENT

(He shakes his head) Are all persons with priorities in the shelters?

ZELLERBACH

Yea, sir. I'm told there isn't a single space left.

PRESIDENT

That's what they're there for. Alright, I'm going to give the stage four alert. *(He inserts a key into the communications box and pushes a series of buttons.)*

The red light's flashing. The signal works at all Government departments and installations. And the TV networks will alert the public.— Well, Paul, that leaves just us to complete the job.

(He goes across the room to the painting of Peruggio's Madonna.)

ZELLERBACH

Here, sir? Not in the situation room where we can observe the computer takeover on the scope?

PRESIDENT

No. This office is still the core of Government.— Can you lift that painting off its hooks?

ZELLERBACH

Goodness, what a lovely face! I've never really looked at it before.

PRESIDENT

It is beautiful, isn't it? The legend goes that Peruggio did twelve paintings of the Madonna in his lifetime. All different, but each is said to have a special quality—filling the thoughts of anyone looking upon it with compassion and love for his fellow men. A wealthy art collector acquired them one by one, and in his will bequeathed them to heads of government throughout the world. One of my predecessors received this.

ZELLERBACH

Which of the twelve is this?

[The President's Office]

PRESIDENT

I don't know, Paul. But considering the place it occupies, it must be the thirteenth.

ZELLERBACH

(shaken) Oh my God, what are we doing?

PRESIDENT

You ask that now? After a lifetime to think about it? This is the endgame in an age-long contest. With only one move left.

ZELLERBACH

(himself again) You're right, sir. We have no choice. It is too late. *(He lifts the painting from the wall and leans it gently against a chair, face away from the audience. The PRESIDENT unlocks the metal door behind it.)*

PRESIDENT

And now your key. *(GENERAL ZELLERBACH opens his case and takes from it an electronic device with a key-like protrusion and inserts it into the wall receptacle that the painting had covered.)*

That leaves only my part. *(He unlocks a drawer in his desk and removes from it a similar electronic device. He makes a quick adjustment, then goes to the wall receptacle and inserts it.)*

ZELLERBACH

Almighty God knows we have no choice—don't you think, sir?

PRESIDENT

At this moment, we are the instruments of God's wrath. He placed us on this beautiful planet. He gave us a brain of miraculous inventiveness. He gave us a heart to experience a spectrum of emotions. And what have we done with them? *(He hesitates briefly, then pulls a lever. The lights flicker momentarily.)*

Be sure to clock it, so we'll have the exact reaction time.

(For a moment, he leans against the wall, his eyes closed. When he turns around, ROSANNE enters through the main door. He goes toward her and takes her hand.)

ZELLERBACH

I'll wait for you, sir.

PRESIDENT

No, Paul, you don't. I've got some unfinished business here. My wife and I will come later. Right now, you're needed below far more than I. Go on Paul. Go!

ZELLERBACH

Come with me, sir. There is so little time.

PRESIDENT

That's exactly why you've got to hurry. Go now. Go!

[Scene Eleven]

(GENERAL ZELLERBACH goes reluctantly to the main door, stops briefly, turns around and salutes the PRESIDENT. Then he goes out quickly.)

Well, dear, there's nothing now to do but wait.

ROSANNE

What have you done with the picture? The beautiful— Oh, no, is that what it covered? *(The PRESIDENT leads her gently to the sofa and sits down with her. She weeps quietly.)*

Oh Burke, I think I am afraid—

PRESIDENT

There's nothing to be afraid of. Nothing at all. Whatever evil there is—we leave behind. I'm sure of that.

ROSANNE *(drying her tears)*

You are so calm, Burke. So wonderfully calm. You must be right—

PRESIDENT

We're beyond right or wrong now. What is done is done. There was no other way.— Many millions of our people will survive this. They'll know what to do. They'll be back at the crossroads we were once. They'll know which way to go this time. And our Constitution remains intact—

ROSANNE

But what about this land—this great and beautiful land of ours?

PRESIDENT

It will be there. It will always be there. We can't really hurt it. Only ourselves. *(He gets up and slowly goes to the window.)* This must be the quietest it's ever been here.

ROSANNE

Come here, Burke. Sit here with me. *(He goes back and sits with her. Suddenly, the main door opens and NELSON YOUNG rushes in.)*

NELSON *(out of breath)*

Mr. President, you've got to come—quickly. Our strikes have begun to register. And they're retaliating—

PRESIDENT *(jumping up)*

Have our strikes been confirmed on the computerscope?

NELSON

Yes, they were just beginning to. But they've also released everything they got. There's just a couple of minutes left. You've got to come, sir, quickly. Please—

PRESIDENT

No, Nelson. You go back! This instant!

[The President's Office]

NELSON

(to Rosanne) You make him come, ma'am. And please, you come with me—

PRESIDENT

No. Nelson. My place is here—in this office. My job is done. Men like you are needed badly. Go, Nelson, go. Go quickly. *(He pushes him toward the door.)*

Thank you, my boy, for trying—

NELSON

Oh, Mr. President—*(his voice is breaking)* God bless you—*(He goes out quickly. The PRESIDENT returns to the sofa.)*

ROSANNE

What a fine boy—wonderful boy. *(Wiping her eyes.)* What a thing to say—I've never thought of him as a boy before.

PRESIDENT

Yes, there're many like him. Many. So, you see, there is hope. Much hope.

ROSANNE

Oh Burke, I love you so—

PRESIDENT

You know, Rose, you haven't said that in a long time. And neither have I. *(He pulls her close to him.)* My dear, dear Rose. We had a good life together, didn't we, you and I?

ROSANNE

Yes, Burke. We had everything. *(Then with an afterthought.)* Except peace.

PRESIDENT

Yes, little Rose. But we'll soon have it now.

FINAL CURTAIN.